

KING DESIRE

AND

HIS KNIGHTS

EDITH·F·A·U·PAINTON



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"PIFER"

FRONTISPIECE
KING DESIRE

KING DESIRE AND HIS KNIGHTS

A FAIRY-TALE FOR CHILDREN AND SOME PARENTS

By
EDITH F. A. U. PAINTON

Author of
"A SONG OF THE FLESH AND THE SPIRIT," "FROM THE
PRAIRIE," ETC., ETC.



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"DEDICATION"

TO MY OWN LITTLE DAUGHTERS,
EILEEN, RAE, AND DORIS;
AND MY SMALL SON, DEO,

WITH THE HOPE THAT IT MAY HELP
TO OPEN THEIR EYES TO THE NEW WORLD HEREIN PICTURED;
AND TO

THE SACRED AND TENDER MEMORY OF
MALLORY YORK PAINTON;
WHOSE DEVELOPING LITTLE LIFE WAS
ITS SOLE SOURCE OF INSPIRATION,
THIS LITTLE FAIRY-TALE THAT "COMES TRUE"
IS MOST TENDERLY
DEDICATED.

San Diego, California,
March 8th, 1913.

E. F. A. U. P.

FOREWORD

IT was the evident lack of New Thought literature that would appeal to the minds and souls of the little folks, that first led me to undertake the composition of this book. The whole philosophy of the new lines of thinking is so beautiful, that it must naturally make a strong appeal to the lives of even the very young when presented in any form suitable for their comprehension. And as it is from these little ones that the men and women of to-morrow must be evolved it stands to reason that it is in their fertile little minds that the seeds of to-day should be carefully planted and nursed to full-flowered life.

Over and over have my little girls turned the pages of the New Thought books and periodicals and tossed them aside. "What is it all about, Mamma? I can't get anything at all out of it!" would be the almost invariable complaint. And for them, and others of their ages who have not been able to glean from the great wealth of literature bearing so beautifully and compre-

hensively upon this wonderful philosophy, the practical truths suited to their own powers of absorption and assimilation, I have endeavored to embody in this little volume all of the fundamental or basic principles of the divine truth, that "the wayfaring man, though a fool, should not err therein." I have tried to give as complete an explanation of the primary New Thought laws always in operation in the great Kingdom of the Soul, as might be woven into the web of the youngest child's every-day experience, and yet to make it all as interesting and entertaining as any fairy-tale that might appeal to our little ones by its wealth of beauty and strong foundation of truth.

With this one end and aim in view, I pass the little book on to the parents who are looking for just some such way of presenting the subject to their children, with the hope that it may be as useful and helpful and instructive, and withal, as welcome and as indulgently received, as it has been carefully and prayerfully prepared by

The AUTHOR,

E. F. A. U. P.

KING DESIRE AND HIS KNIGHTS

CHAPTER I

"AUNTIE SUE."

THE Evans children danced with glee, and made the air ring with their shouts of joy and satisfaction, when the letter came from Aunt Susie, stating in very plain words that she was really coming to spend her whole long summer vacation with them in their little village home.

There was a real large family of these children,—Will, Hattie, Frank, Olive, Harry, Ethel, and Oma, and little five-year-old Pete, whom everybody who knew him spoke of far more often as "Pifer,"—though this name had been given to him so long, long ago that not one of the family could remember a thing about where it came from, or why the name still clung so closely to the little fellow.

As though these eight children were not quite enough for all manner of good times and big undertakings, as well as all sorts of unmentionable pranks and plunders, just across the street from them lived their cousins, the Johnsons, who added to the number a Henry, Alice, Edna, Marion, Ralph, and little Ara, to say nothing of the big Newfoundland, Bruno, who never failed to take part,—and a really important part,—in whatever was going on!

Now, when I say that the whole fourteen youngsters were just like one large family, and that they were nearly always to be found all together, either in one yard, or in the other,—and when I add that they were not story-book children at all, but real, live children, with red blood, instead of ink in their veins, and warm flesh, instead of paper on their bones, it will not be hard for you to understand that it took more than one pair of keen eyes to follow all their movements, and more than one warning voice to guide and direct them "in the way they should go." You will readily see, too, that when the letter was read aloud to the eager crowd, and the glad word was passed around from lip to lip,

"Auntie Sue is really coming to stay all summer!"

the shout that went up toward the blue sky on

the afternoon breeze was no faint little whisper, but seemed to pierce the very heavens with the wild, youthful joy of it's “Auntie Sue! Auntie Sue!”

“A large family of young ones like ours is certainly a jolly thing,” Mr. Evans was wont to say to his wife when these outbursts rent the air, and smote upon his ear, “but no one can deny that it certainly is a very noisy thing! We seem to be celebrating the Fourth of July all the time!”

“Yes,” his wife would say, with a look of forced patience, “they are so unreasonably full of life and spirit. They take every fresh joy and grief so much to heart, that they don't ever seem able to hold it in at all!”

But even Mr. and Mrs. Evans admitted that this event was worthy of even the enthusiastic demonstration its announcement received!

Aunt Susie was the sister of both Mrs. Evans and Mrs. Johnson. She was also the children's favorite aunt, and with the delicious frankness of childhood, they took no pains whatever to conceal this plain truth from any one.

It was not hard to find out the reason, either. In the first place, Aunt Susie liked children,—really, truly liked them! She seemed to take

them right into her very heart, and be young again with them. She always understood them so well, even when they were right down naughty, that they were never afraid to tell her all that came into their busy little brains. They knew she would not laugh at them, however papas and mammas, who, somehow, never did seem to understand, might receive their little efforts at putting into words all that was within them,—of expressing the little inner selves that were growing so rapidly inside of their sturdy, healthy little bodies!

Aunt Susie must have lived many years,—O surely, very many years!—for she seemed to know just everthing in all the world!—everything that was, that ever had been, or that ever would be!

But, still, she seemed to have a very girlish heart somewhere about inside of her, or else a very-much-alive memory of the days when she was just a wondering child herself, for she could enter so well into all their plans and feelings that she seemed just like a chum to every one of them. And, somehow, they always said, very plainly and frankly, that they would rather have a visit from her, than from any boy or girl of their own ages that any of them knew, or had ever known, in all the big, wide world!

They had plenty of other Aunts,—O yes!

“ Too many of them, altogether!” Will said, with a snort of disdain.

Aunts *as* aunts, had never appeared very desirable to this crowd of boys and girls. In the first place, none of them liked children. To be sure, they had never really been heard to say so, in so many words. They kissed them all around, whenever they came, and again, with a sort of relief, when they went. They gave them sweetmeats,—never the kind children are apt to like, however!—presented them with little gifts,—always something more useful than beautiful, or, to the child-mind, especially desirable!—and they always smiled a certain fixed, tolerant smile, whenever any one of them ventured to make any sort of a remark. But—well, was it ever necessary for anybody to tell a child how much he liked, or did not like him? Indeed, was it ever possible for any person to cover up from the keen wits of a child the exact state of his feelings toward him? There is a certain atmosphere of like or dislike that every person carries about with him, and the child senses it as soon as the person does himself,—perhaps even before he is quite sure within himself what the real state of his feelings is! So bright and quick are the senses of childhood, before the duties and experiences of the after-

life have been allowed to dull the edges, and blunt the point of their perceptions!

So of course, they knew, only too well, just how little all the other aunts of their family really cared for them! The noise bored them—poor, nervous women that they were! Questions irritated them,—possibly because they were so utterly unable to answer any of them,—and whoever saw a real, live child who was not an animated question-mark? They saw all their little naughtiness, and were not in the least slow to express their dislike of it. They seemed built,—every single one of these aunts,—for the express purpose of finding fault!

But Aunt Susie was an altogether different sort of a person. She was not a real aunt at all!—or, if she was, the others weren't! In the fond hearts of the children, she made up a whole class, all by herself. In counting up their family relations, they were apt to say something like this:

"And then, there's the aunts!—and there's Auntie Sue!"

And nobody who knew Aunt Susie, and had ever seen the other aunts, thought it was very strange of them, either!

Aunt Susie was a school-teacher in a big city, miles and miles away! She spent her whole life among children. She often said she would be

utterly lost, she feared, without a throng of noisy, chattering boys and girls within her sight and hearing.

She wasn't just an ordinary school-teacher, either,—O dear, no! Aunt Susie could never be ordinary in anything, no matter how hard she tried! She didn't just make her pupils learn common, every-day facts and figures out of dry, stuffy old books! She touched everything in the school-day grind with the magic wand of her own fancy, and made it glow with beauty and life and color and meaning!

She was full of stories, too,—real stories that real children like,—not “ blood-and-thunder,”—“ blackbirds-baked-in-a-pie ” stories, that appeal to the cruel tastes of the savage, or the depraved appetites of the barbarian mind,—but sweet, beautiful stories of real things,—the fairy-land of Nature, and the wonderland of Science,—the glory and splendor of those uplifting, elevating fairy-tales that are always coming true all around us, in every part of the big, wide world, and that make us better and wiser, and happier boys and girls because of the lessons they teach us, and the wishes they waken in us to do some great and wonderful things, all of ourselves! She always took them with her into a different world than the prosy, duty-darkened, cloud-dimmed world some people always live in.

Is it any wonder, then, that caps flew in air, and handkerchiefs waved like flags of uncontrollable joy, in a wild accompaniment to their enthusiastic shouts of——

"Auntie Sue! Auntie Sue!"

CHAPTER II.

FROM THE MOTHERS' POINT OF VIEW.

“**D**EAR me, Susie, you actually look younger and fresher than ever!” said Mrs. Evans, when the children were at last safely stowed away in bed, on the evening after her sister’s arrival, and the house had become, for the first time in many hours, quiet and at peace with the world. “However do you accomplish it?”

“By thinking young thoughts, Louise,” said her sister promptly. “By keeping the spirit fresh and happy, and seeing nothing but the bright and beautiful things of life, I suppose. I don’t mean ever to grow old. Why should I? Why should any of us?”

“It’s plain to be seen,” sighed Mrs. Johnson, who had come over to welcome the expected guest, and who had lingered until the evening, loath to tear herself away from her bright, cheery sister’s side, when she had not seen her before for so long a time,—“yes, it’s plain enough to be

seen that you haven't got a family of troublesome children on your hands to worry the life and heart and soul out of you!"

"Poor, lonely me!" sighed Susie, with so bright a smile that it contradicted the words as fast as they fell from her lips. "Have you no pity at all for my 'lone, lorn' state, Anna, that you can calmly throw it in my teeth, in this cruel, heartless way? But," she persisted, seriously, "I wouldn't allow myself to get old,—not a day older than I look now,—if I had both your families in one! Nature never intended the human family to grow weary, and wrinkled, and wasted, and worn, I am sure she didn't! Does she not renew herself, year after year, in a freshness that is eternal? Does she ever allow herself to look faded and jaded? And yet, what wonders of creation, and re-creation,—of production, and re-production,—she brings about, as if by magic, in all her 'visible forms!' She does not let her energies go to waste,—why should we? She does not squander her forces,—why should we? She does not fret and worry herself to a shadow about some to-morrow that may never become to-day, and will not be half as bad, if it does, as she fancies it will be,—why should we? She takes care of herself in every possible way, and keeps eternal, youth, strength, beauty, and happiness

in every fibre of her being,—and so, dear sisters, should we!”

“That’s all right in theory, Susie,” said Mrs. Evans, with a deprecating smile.

“But do I look as if I were living on a *theory*?” objected Susie.

“Well, of course, it works with you, who have no cares or worries in the world, but, as I was going to say, for wives and mothers, it is simply impossible!” continued Mrs. Evans.

“Yes, indeed,” said Mrs. Johnson.

“But why?” urged Susie.

“You don’t know our children,” was the weary mother’s reply.

“Pardon me, Anna, but I *do* know your children,—every blessed one of the fourteen. I sometimes think that I know them much better than you can possibly know them yourself.”

The sisters who were mothers exchanged glances of superior understanding. How could this aunt, who had never even been married, and who only saw these little nephews and nieces once in a year, and sometimes two years, possibly know their own boys and girls better than they did, who lived right with them, day in and day out? That was absurd,—preposterous!

“I see you don’t believe that,” she said, with a smile, correctly reading the expression of their

faces, "and I know how ridiculous it must sound to you. Tell me, then, if you will, please, what there is about the children, that I have not yet found out for myself. I want to truly know them, you know,—just as they really are!"

"Why, Susie, they're just common every-day children, you know, just full of faults and—and—deviltry!" said Mrs. Johnson.

"And there are so many of them, you see," said Mrs. Evans, "that we haven't time to get right down to the very bottom of all their naughty little traits, and root them out, as we should. It is scold, scold, scold, the whole live-long time,—and yet all the talking we can do doesn't seem to have any effect at all!"

"Nor the whip, either," added Mrs. Johnson. "The more you punish, the worse they get!"

"I see," said Susie, with unusual gravity. "I did not know, after all. I did not realize what very naughty boys and girls they were. They must be very bad children, indeed, Anna, if such violent measures are required."

"O I don't think they really mean to be so bad," put in Mrs. Evans hastily, who did not exactly relish this view of the matter. "They just don't think, and so——"

"Yes, Louise," assented Susie, "that is the

main fault of all of us human beings, I am sure. We just don't think!"

"I know," continued Mrs. Evans, thoughtfully, "that they often try to be good children, and try to overcome their faults. I think they want to do what we tell them is right, if they only knew how. But they forget so soon!"

"Yes," said Susie, still very serious and thoughtful. "I see!" After a pause, she added,

"Suppose you tell me of all these terrible, unconquerable faults, girls,—so that I may know better than you seem to think I do now, just what kind of children they are. Then we will see if I can't find some good, reasonable way out of what certainly seems a very serious and grievous situation! You know I've had a great many years' experience in handling the little sons and daughters of 'all sorts and conditions of men.'"

The sisters thought a moment. They naturally shrank from discussing the shortcomings of their own children with any other person, even so devoted a child-lover as the adored Auntie Sue. However, the condition of things now existing was certainly not a desirable one,—things could certainly not be much worse,—and Susie had always been very wise and successful in her dealings with children,—they knew that. If she could, by any manner of means, be any help to

them, and improve, ever so little, the very naughty natures of their little ones,—well, they'd give her the symptoms, anyway, and let her diagnose the case from the standpoint of the physician.

Their eyes met, and they nodded a mutual assent. Susie intercepted the look, and smiled.

"Well, Sue," began Mrs. Evans, "it isn't best to be always complaining,—I know you don't believe in it at all,—but here is the way that matters stand in my case. I love my children, every one of the eight, better than anything else in the world. But it keeps me so busy attending to their food, and drink, and what they shall wear——"

"Yes, the 'wherewithal shall they be clothed,'—I know!" put in Susie, with a smile. "You seem to forget the 'Seek ye first the kingdom of Good, and its right-use-ness, when all these things shall be added unto you.'"

"Yes, I'm afraid I do," admitted Mrs. Evans, with a sigh, "though I do honestly and earnestly want the best for my family,—the best in every way. But I do truly despair of ever making out of them the boys and girls I want them to be,—the men and women God surely must have meant them to be!"

Quite likely that very feeling of despair defeats your purpose at the outset, Louise!"

"Maybe!" sighed Mrs. Evans.

"But, to be more definite, Louise——?"

"Yes,—yes, I am coming to that! To begin with the oldest, Will, is so inclined to be really cruel, domineering,—‘bossy,’ the children call it, that he gives me no end of trouble. Hattie is lazy. I tell her so, over and over, every day of her life, but she never gets very far along in the overcoming of it. I often tell her that I don’t really believe that she ever seriously tries. Frank would do very well, if he had not such a quick, nasty temper, and didn’t fly into a million pieces at the least thing that goes wrong. Olive is selfish, and though I continually point it out to her, and reprove, and rebuke, and scold, and even whip, I can’t see that she tries very hard to get rid of it. Harry is slovenly,—they are none of them any too particular about keeping neat and tidy, you know,—but Harry is a constant thorn in my flesh. Ethel is a peevish, whining cry-baby—you know what I mean,—she can’t bear either pain of body or disappointment of mind, and won’t even try! She is the biggest coward alive,—I get all out of patience with her. Oma,—well, it would make you laugh in spite of yourself to see how vain she is. She is the prettiest child in the family, and she knows it only too well. We simply can’t shame her out of it. O dear! O

dear! Susie, you just can't possibly imagine what a cross it is for a mother to carry to see all these hideous faults cropping up every day, and to have all of your coaxings, scoldings, threats, and punishments, altogether thrown away, in trying to make a single one of them any different!"

Susie was silent a moment.

"How about Pete?" she asked, at last, a peculiar tone in her voice that neither of the sisters understood. "Has my little Pifer no sins of omission or commission to account for at the Day of Judgment?"

"You will be surprised, Susie, to learn that he, young as he is, has a besetting sin of his own,—one that is very hard to cope with. Indeed, I am not sure that it does not worry me more than all the rest. The child has absolutely no regard whatever for the truth. He will tell the most extravagant lies you ever heard a child make up, and look as innocent and angelic all the time, as though he actually believed every word he was saying."

"That is strange, Louise."

"Yes, almost unaccountable, don't you think? I suppose it must necessarily be due to some hereditary or pre-natal influence, but I have never yet been able to place the past blame where it belongs."

“And now for the Johnson branch,” said Susie, after a pause. “What can you tell me about your children, Anna, that you are sure I don’t already know?”

“O I don’t care to dwell on it,” said Mrs. Johnson, with a shrug of the shoulders. “It’s bad enough to live in the element all the time, without putting in the visiting minutes talking it all over. It’s a sort of relief to get entirely away from it sometimes. And I gave up all hope of trying to do anything with the reformation of my unruly brood long ago. I have scolded till I was hoarse, I have whipped till my arms ached for hours after; I have cried till my eyes were sore; yes, I have even prayed till my very faith was dead. Now I just let them go at their own sweet will, till my nerve and patience is utterly worn to shreds—then I get Ben to step in and give them a good, sound threshing all around, and after the noise of their yelling and wailing has died away, I have a sort of peace for another week or two! But,” she ended with a long-drawn sigh, “I’ll certainly be one thankful woman when they’re all grown up, and entirely off my hands and heart.”

“But you haven’t told me——”

“No, but I will!—in just as few words as I can, and have it over with. Henry’s stubborn, deter-

mined upon having his own way, no matter what it is, nor how it displeases us all. He usually gets it, too, because he wears us all out. Alice is disobedient. She simply does not pretend to mind a word that is said to her, and nothing will make her! Edna wouldn't be so bad if she wasn't so conceited, but she thinks that nobody in all the world knows anything, or can do anything, except herself! Marion is a quitter,—he begins anything bravely and boldly enough, but at the least thing that goes wrong, he's off the track entirely, and has given up the whole race. Ralph is so badly inclined to put off everything he has to do until the very last minute that I get thoroughly provoked at him every day of my life; and Ira,—of course, he's too little for any very pronounced failings,—but he is very impolite and rude to everybody—'sassy,' as the children say,—and we don't seem able to teach him the first steps in good manners!”

“You can see for yourself now, Susie,” said Mrs. Evans, “that the situation you have found here is a very serious one.”

“Yes, indeed,” assented Susie, slowly, “it is,—it surely is! It is even more serious than I at first thought it could be.”

A silence fell over the little group, as they sat for some time looking into the glowing embers of the fire, each busy with her own thoughts.

CHAPTER III

THE AUNT'S POINT OF VIEW

THE clock struck nine. The sisters started from their reverie, and looked at one another with a sudden smile. And then Susie spoke.

"Will you let me speak plainly, girls?" she asked.

"Certainly," responded Mrs. Johnson, promptly.

"Always,—to us!" added Mrs. Evans.

"And to every one," said Susie, quietly, "if at all. When I cannot be perfectly frank, and speak my real true mind, I keep perfectly still, and let other people say what they choose."

"Say whatever you like," said Mrs. Johnson, with a smile. "We will take whatever it may be, just as we did at home, when we were all girls together. If it hurts, we'll just grin and bear it."

"We'll be sure it is just what we need, if *you* think it is good for us," said Mrs. Evans fondly. "Scold away!"

"I do not want to scold," said Susie. "Far from it! I do not believe in scolding in the least,—not under any circumstances that can

come up. I'm sure it always does more harm than good! But I do want to point out very clearly just where I think you have made a mistake in dealing with these dear children of ours, and I want to be sure that you will see just the point I am trying to make, and that you will understand it, just exactly as I mean it!"

"We will try," said Mrs. Evans.

"We will do our best, Sue," said Mrs. Johnson.

"An angel could do no more than that," smiled Susie. "Now, in the first place, you have made a mistake in thinking your children are bad. No human being is bad,—certainly, no sweet, innocent child! If you think they are bad, you make them think the same of themselves, and I tell you, girls, you must be careful how you rob a child of his own self-respect. He does not do wrong because he is really bad, but because he does not know just the best way to do right. I believe as James Whitcomb Riley sings,

‘I believe all children’s good,
Ef they’re only understood;—
Even bad ones, ’pears to me,
’S jes’ as good as they kin be.’

and I want you to believe it, too, and to make the children believe it. Even that will make a dif-

ference in the way they look at themselves, and at everything else."

"It makes a mother feel better to be able to look at it that way, I suppose, anyway," said Mrs. Evans, "whether it may really benefit the children, or not."

"To be sure it does," said Susie. "Just you try it and see! In the second place, you have made a mistake by telling the child of his every fault, and thus by constant reminders, keeping the thought of it in his mind, and planting it deeper and deeper."

"But how—?" began both ladies at once, and then, paused, smiling at one another.

"Do not say, 'You are so lazy!' but instead, 'How much it pleases me, whenever you are ambitious!' Do not dwell upon the fault at all, but praise, instead, the smallest indication of the opposite virtue. Do you see?"

The mothers nodded.

"That gives the mind the uplifting suggestion, and the child's natural desire to please, and to be praised, will nurse it to life. Never make a practice of saying 'Don't!' about anything, but always say 'Do!' When you take something away, never fail to put something better in its place."

"I'm not sure I catch your meaning there, Susie," said Mrs. Evans. "If we never said 'Don't!' they would run into all kinds of difficulties!"

"Not if you understand the way to put the matter. What I mean is this. Instead of saying, 'Don't walk on that side of the street!' say 'Walk on this side of the street!' Instead of saying, 'Don't sit in that chair!' say 'Sit in this chair!' Instead of saying, 'Don't soil your apron!' say, 'Be sure and keep your apron nice and clean!' It is merely a difference in the way you give the suggestion, but it makes more real difference than you may realize."

"I see!" said Mrs. Evans.

"Above all, you must not see the little failings you have been telling me of as any part of the children at all. They are *not*. Your children are not lazy, nor stubborn, nor disobedient, nor anything of the sort. They have been thinking that kind of thoughts,—perhaps handed down to them,—and have got into those habits of thought, and so of action,—but this is not the real *self* of the child. That is good, and sweet and true and altogether lovely, because a part of All-Good,—'in the image and likeness of God.' The habits are so superficial, they can be easily brushed away, when the right kind of thoughts are encouraged,

and the real *self* is allowed to come to the surface!"

"But does not the Bible say, 'By their fruits, ye shall know them?' asked Mrs. Johnson. "If it isn't the real *self* that we shall know by the habit, what is it?"

"A self choked back from bearing its real fruit by weeds, and unnatural growths, Anna. The child, itself, is good—all good! If you persist in thinking it is bad, you keep the evil suggestion bound tightly about its truer aspirations, and choking the life out of all its natural tendencies toward goodness and truth, until, it has no chance to express its true inner self at all. What kind of fruit could it possibly bear? You must just refuse to see, or accept, or even look for, anything at all but the best in each child,—believe in the good underneath the unpromising surface,—nurse it, coax it, encourage it to sprout and grow until it blossoms and bears fruit before your very eyes! It will,—it surely will! It cannot help it!"

"I suppose that is what you call 'New Thought,' Susie," said Mrs. Johnson.

"Something of it," assented Susie, "though there is really nothing 'new' about it at all. Indeed, it is the oldest thought in the world, com-

ing down to us from the creation, when 'God saw the world, that it was good.' Take it home to yourself a minute. Would you find it easy to do right, if you knew that everybody was continually watching for you to do wrong? It is like the poor girl or boy, who, because one misstep has been taken, knows the whole world is watching them, expecting them to do only the same bad things, over and over, over and over again. Having no hand to lift them up, or even expect them to get up, is it any wonder that they go from bad to worse until every good impulse, every noble instinct, is stifled, literally choked to death by the cruel suggestions, both of mind and voice, of a blind and misunderstanding old world, not one bit better in the inner self, than the ones they have condemned? O that we might all hurry and wake up to the truth! As I said before, Louise, Anna,—would you find it easy to be 'good' in every action, if somebody kept always telling you that you were wrong, and you knew that all your little world had the same thought,—the same expectations—of you?"

"No, of course not!" admitted both ladies in a breath.

"Then give your child the same chance to be good, that you ask for yourself. Take your mental hands off them, and *let them be good*. They

can't help being good, I know, if you will give them the slightest chance to be themselves!"

"It would certainly be worth trying, wouldn't it, Anna?" said Mrs. Evans, after a pause.

"Indeed, yes," said Mrs. Johnson. "Anything in all the world would be worth trying that would make the Johnson young ones any better, or easier to get along with!" Then she added, dubiously, "If it would only work!"

Susie smiled, but made no comment upon the implied doubt.

"I have a proposition to make to you both," she said. "I have two long months before my school opens this fall, and I wish you would give the training of the children entirely into my hands while I am here."

"All of them?" gasped Mrs. Evans, looking at Mrs. Johnson in utter amazement.

"The whole fourteen!" replied Susie firmly, with a smile. "And Bruno thrown in, for good measure."

"But, Susie," protested Mrs. Johnson, "after you have been working for ten whole months with so many children, to come away off out here to get some rest, and then take two whole families on your hands for the vacation,—it seems like an imposition on our part!"

Susie laughed merrily.

"I shall love it," she said. "The dear things! Children are my specialty, you know,—my one particular hobby,—and I really should not enjoy myself at all during the summer, if I didn't have a dozen or so of them to be thinking of, and doing something for!"

"Well, they, at least, would enjoy it," said Mrs. Evans, with a touch of feeling. She had always been just a little jealous of her children's frank preference for their Aunt Susie.

"I only stipulate one thing," said Susie, "and that is, that neither of you shall interfere at all with any of my plans or propositions. Let me say and do whatever my impulses may lead to, and follow out every impression, just as it comes. You can trust me, I think."

"Trust you?" said Mrs. Johnson, reproachfully.

"Why, Susie!" protested Mrs. Evans, almost in the same breath.

"And how about Ben and Charles? We must not enter into any definite agreement without their full sanction and approval," said Susie.

"O pshaw!" said Mrs. Evans, "Charles would be only too glad to have anything in the world going on, if it would only make the young ones any less of a bother to him. He has even threatened to hand the whole 'bunch' to some far-away orphan asylum!"

"It might be better for the children in the long run," thought Susie, but she said nothing, merely turning to Mrs. Johnson, as that lady began to speak.

"As for Ben," said she, "he would never even know that there was anything at all out of the ordinary going on! He is always so completely wrapped up in his business affairs, that he never once thinks of his home and family, unless absolutely compelled to recognize their existence. He has always left the care and management of the children entirely to me!"

"Nevertheless," insisted Susie, "I prefer that they should both be consulted before we come to any final decision. I feel that it would be a rest for you both, and a help to both you and the children in many ways. In the meantime, I can give you both a clearer, more complete understanding of my ideas on the subject, and I am sure you will find the care of the children hereafter,—and certainly, the worry about their many so-serious faults,—a much lighter burden,—if, indeed, it is any burden at all! I will speak to Charles myself about the matter, just as soon as he comes home, and if I can see Ben——"

"O I'll talk to Ben, if you insist," said Mrs. Johnson, "though he'll only grunt out a word of no particular meaning, and ask why 'in thunderation' I bothered him with the matter!"

The sisters laughed aloud at this quite too truthful picture of what they knew to be a characteristic manner of the self-centred Mr. Johnson, and the subject was dropped for the time being, as they drifted dreamily back into reminiscences of their own girlhood, when they, too, had doubtless caused their parents the same anxiety and care that they themselves were experiencing now, in their own growing flock.

"You were certainly never meant for an old maid, Susie," they said, "and it's very hard to realize that you actually are one! But I suppose figures won't lie!"

"No, indeed!—or, at least, if 'figures' will, faces won't!" she replied. "And I assure you, girls, that I am every bit as old as I look!—though I certainly don't feel it!"

And she looked so irresistibly girlish and charming as she said this, though she was in reality the oldest in years of the three sisters, that they laughed outright, while each secretly wished that she, too, had fathomed their sister's secret of keeping so provokingly young!

CHAPTER IV.

THE CHILDREN'S POINT OF VIEW

THE next day was Sunday, and while Aunt Susie might quite reasonably be expected to be very tired after her long journey from the big city, so many miles away, she was up bright and early and ready for a long, glad day with her little charges.

All of the children had always been very faithful attendants at the little Sunday School of the orthodox church,—the only church in the little village,—not from any particular interest it had so far succeeded in arousing in their young hearts, but because they had been brought up from their earliest years to consider it a very vital part of their weekly duty, and they had never thought it even possible to miss a single Sunday.

Just what they had ever really learned at Sunday School, it would have been very hard to say! In just what particular light they really viewed the matter, it would be harder still to say. To be sure, it afforded them a change from the

monotonous round of the week,—it was some place to go,—something to do,—but if they had been asked to express an honest opinion, I am sure that every one of them would have preferred to get out into the heart of the woods where the birds sing, and the waters laugh, in response to the kiss of the murmuring breeze,—and there let Nature's God speak at will to each little soul, planting the seed of the great truth of which that particular soul was most in need, and most ready for, without the too-often blundering interference of any incompetent human interpreter.

Far be it, however, from any plan or wish of Aunt Susie's, to interfere with any religious education her sisters might have begun to instil. It was not her purpose to tear down, but to build up,—patch up—clean up,—in some cases, perhaps, cover up with flowers of truth the old worn-out, tottering creeds that were still tyrannically dominating so many minds.

Fortunately, for the children, there was no Sunday School service at all on this particular day. There happened to be a large Sunday School Convention at some other town in the county to which all the teachers and officers had been summoned in attendance, and this left the little Evanses and Johnsons conveniently free to roam the woods at their own sweet will.

Of course the fathers concerned had only too gladly waived all paternal claims upon their young hopefuls for the coming two months, and they had planned to spend this first day in the big woods near by, with a lunch, and a jug of lemonade, and fourteen very happy and expectant little faces, not to forget the dog, whose wagging tail eloquently testified to the pleasure he could only voice in his quick, short barks of approval and "doggy" appreciation.

They were indeed a merry party, as they always were when with Aunt Susie. Some gay spirit lurking deep within her own nature always seemed to call forth all the joy of living in the naturally light hearts of happy childhood; and laugh answered laugh, jest followed jest, song responded to song, each seeming to vie with the other as to who might be the happiest, while bird, and bee, and breeze, and streamlet echoed back each glad and cheery thought.

It was just the very day for new beginnings, Aunt Susie thought, as she smiled up at the splendid sun, peeping down at her in radiant love and light and life from between the branches of the trees,—a day filled with the very spirit of inspiration and hope and faith and cheer! And, leading her band of youthful companions to a delightfully cozy little glade, through which

rippled and danced a happy streamlet, singing its gladsome lay as it smiled its loving messages in response to the brooding blue sky overhead, she began to prepare the lunch, and soon found herself seated upon the green, flower-covered carpet, and looking happily in turn into fourteen pairs,—no, I was forgetting Bruno again,—into fifteen pairs of eyes, that returned her loving glances with all the love of their warm, throbbing young hearts.

“It has been nearly two years since we last had a day together in the dear old woods like this, hasn’t it, my dears?” she began.

“Yes,” was the response from all fourteen pairs of lips, trying hard to sound mournful,—for two whole years is really a very, very long time, when measured by the mind of a child,—but finding the expression of regret peculiarly modified by the crowded mouthfuls of food that checked their forceful utterance.

“And I wonder,” added Aunt Susie, “how much you have all learned in this long time of the real things in the world that make life so much worth the living!”

The children stared at her. Of course they had been to school, and learned whatever the teachers had compelled them to learn, but none of them seemed to have found that it made their lives any

different than they had been before. They had had some fine times, some big fights, some hard blows, some great disappointments, and some really hard tasks to do, they thought, but just what it had all meant to them in their every-day lives, they had never once stopped to consider. What did Auntie Sue mean? She always had such a way of her own of putting things!

She laughed at the troubled expression of their eyes, as she looked from one to the other.

"I mean," she explained, "how much have you learned of your real selves,—that great big Me that lives inside of every one of you?"

For a moment, the murmuring of the stream, and the twittering of the birds in the tree-tops were the only sounds that broke the silence.

Each seemed wondering what to say, and after a time, it was really pitiful to see each little face fall, as some painful memory sprang to life to tell the tender little conscience how very bad the child had sometimes been.

"I know I'm mean, and cruel, and—and—all that!" said Will, the eldest of the crowd, hanging his head with shame at the remembrance of certain parental words that still carried their sting in the boyish memory. "I've found out that much about my real self, all right!" he added, bitterly.

Will was almost fifteen, and he had been made to feel himself, in some way he could not quite understand, as almost altogether responsible for all the weaknesses and failures of the whole family, if not the family of cousins, too; for Henry, the eldest of the Johnson children, was only thirteen, and so, in Will's eyes, very much of a child yet, for whose naughtinesses, it naturally stood to reason, those who were older, and therefore, wiser than he, must stand accountable.

"I'm not so mean," said Henry, following, as usual, the lead of his cousin, for whom he entertained the admiration and affection that a younger boy is apt to feel for an elder. "But I'm as—as—as 'stubborn as a mule!'"

"I'm just a lazy, good-for-nothing thing," said Hattie. "I don't like to work. I never will amount to anything in all the world, I guess."

And so it went on, through the whole crowd, each confessing his own little weakness as freely as in the Confessional, but with a certain hopeless shame that was very touching to the keen eyes so skilled in reading the faces of children, and interpreting the unspoken thought.

She patted the curly head of little Pete, who nestled close beside her, never very far away

when it was possible for him to edge his little body near.

"How about you, Pifer?" she asked, caressingly, but with a tremble in her voice that she could scarcely steady, for the little fellow was very dear to her heart. "Have you no great, awful sins to tell Auntie Sue all about?"

"O I's just a natural born liar, Auntie Sue," he said carelessly, smiling up at her. "I never tries to tell the truth, you know!" His confiding eyes met hers with so innocent an expression, that, in spite of the pain his words caused her, she felt that he could not possibly understand their meaning, and smiled a sad little smile as she pressed her lips to his.

Indeed, she had winced inwardly at each separate confession, as she recognized in these expressions the very words of their mothers, and realized how relentlessly their suggestions of inherent evil must have been sounded into the childish ears that they had already learned their lessons so well.

"Poor little innocents!" she thought, "and poor, mistaken mothers! I have, indeed, a big work ahead of me in these two short months!—many harmful thoughts to uproot, and counteract by fresh, new seed,—much mischief to undo! May I have sufficient light and strength and

wisdom and love and patience and faith from the Great Source that I may not fail to perform the mission well!"

She skillfully led the conversation away from these unhappy thoughts, and qualms of self-accusation, and soon had them laughing as madly and merrily as ever. Thank God for the short memories of childhood!

Just before leaving the enchanted spot for the return home, she said to them, seriously,

"Now, my dears, I have come to visit you all for two long months, and we must plan to get just all out of them we possibly can, mustn't we?"

There was, of course, a general assent to this, and she went on hastily,

"Of course, I shall have to give a great deal of my time to the mammas, and my books, and letters, but you remember what our poet says,—I am sure you have learned it at school,—

‘Between the dark and the daylight,
When the night is beginning to lower,
Comes a pause in the day's occupations,
That is known as the children's hour,’

and that hour I shall never fail to give to you. You must tell me all your little troubles, if you

have any, and all your plans, your wishes, your thoughts,—just all about yourselves, you know, and I, in return, will tell you——”

“Fairy tales?” asked fourteen eager voices, in one breath.

“And poems?” added two or three, as an after-thought.

For Aunt Susie sometimes wrote little rhymes and jingles that the children thought were just the most wonderful poems ever written in all the world; and they were never tired of hearing her repeat them, or read them, and always learned for themselves just as many of them as they could.

A flash of sudden light burst upon her at the word.

“Poems, of course!” she thought. “I can weave into my little rhymes many of the mighty truths I want to plant deep into their memories, and thus teach them much that I might not be able to present to such young minds intelligently, in any other way!”

“Fairy tales, of course!—if you really want them,” she answered, “and we’ll see if we can’t, by our very own selves, make some of the very best of them come true. And poems?—yes, too!—just as many as I can fit into the fairy tales, and

as you will all promise me to learn and remember."

"O Auntie Sue, we can remember—" began the crowd enthusiastically, pausing for a promise that they might feel sure they would all be able to keep.

"Millions and millions!" added little Pete.

And at this, they all burst into such a laugh of real enjoyment, that the number they would learn was never more definitely stipulated.

"When shall we begin, Auntie Sue?" asked Olive, eager for a chance to monopolize as much of her aunt's society as was possible, from the very outset. "To-night?"

"No, not to-night, dear," was the reply. "We have had a whole long happy day together, and it will be quite time after supper for little bodies and brains to be stretching out for rest. Besides, don't you think that Mamma might like to see a little of Auntie Sue, after all this time? But, to-morrow night, just after supper,—and every night, thereafter, so long as Auntie Sue is here,—we will have our Children's Hour,—and a whole, sixty-minute hour, just before we go to bed,—when nobody else in all the world shall have any right to intrude upon us, or say a single, solitary word!"

This announcement was greeted with a cheer

that made the old woods ring with the thrill of happy expectations, while Bruno leaped and barked in sympathy with the prevailing sentiment in which, no doubt, he heartily joined; and it was a very merry crowd that soon afterward started on the homeward walk, clustering around Aunt Susie like bees around a rose.

And thus it was that the matter was arranged to the complete satisfaction of all concerned; and thus, too, it was that this little story came to be written.

CHAPTER V

"THE SONGS WE SING"

IT was that same Sunday evening, after the supper things had been cleared away, and Aunt Susie had retired to her room to write some letters in time to catch the early morning post, that the children gathered around the parlor organ for some music. Hearing the soft strains floating up from the room just under her own, Aunt Susie was about to join the family and add her voice to the melody, when she paused, in the centre of her little room, and stood very still, her attention irresistibly attracted by the nature of the words they were singing:—

“Jesus, Saviour, pity me
Hear me when I cry to thee,
I’ve a very wicked heart,
Full of sin in every part.

“When I try to do thy will,
Sin is in my bosom still,
‘And I soon do something bad;
Then my heart is dark and sad.”

Aunt Susie shuddered. No wonder they thought themselves beyond all hope, when these songs were being so firmly planted into their little minds!—such ideas of themselves embodied in the very words of their “hymns of praise.”

The air was changing now, and she listened eagerly, hoping for some change in the sentiment of the words that were ascending into the vast spaces of heaven from those little innocent voices!—What did she hear?—

“I’m thinking of my sins,
 What wicked things I’ve done!
 How very naughty I have been,
 Although I am so young!

“How wicked is my heart!
 How can I be forgiven?
 Should I with earth be called to part,
 I could not sing in heaven.”

The song went on. What the rest of the heretical statements may have been, Aunt Susie did not hear. She sank down into her chair, and gave herself entirely up to an hour of serious reflection. What could she do or say against the influence of such a daily atmosphere as this?—such an all-pervading sentiment,—such a real

part of their life and thought? It was so much worse than she had realized!

Again the music changed, and her attention was forcibly attracted, but alas! There was no change in the thought expressed! Were these cruel, blighting words all the songs their young minds knew? Was this how they attempted to "rejoice, and be exceeding glad?"—how they tried to "make a glad noise unto the Lord?"

"Heavenly Father, pity me,
For my soul is full of sin;
I have wandered far from Thee,—
O, how wicked I have been!
Can I ever be forgiven?
Can my sins be washed away?—
So that I shall sing in Heaven,
Where from Thee no children stray?

"Canst Thou love a WICKED CHILD,
Who has often disobeyed?
Canst Thou ever on me smile,
As if from Thee I'd not strayed?
Often, Father, Thou hast called,
But I did not listen then;
Surely I will hearken now,
If Thou wilt but speak again."

Back went Aunt Susie's mind to her own child-

hood, many, many years before, when she had lived in such utter terror of a harsh, relentless God and His fiery lake of torment. Over and over, she lived some of those horrible nights of the baby years, when because of some trifling fault she was all too-conscious of having committed, she had crouched beneath the bed-clothes, shuddering and shrinking from the hideous memory of her sin, and fearing to uncover her head, lest the glaring eye of an angry God should pierce to the depths of her quivering heart, and send her, in the twinkling of an eye, all unforgiven and unblessed, to His terrible hell, there to “burn, and burn, and burn, forever and ever!”—as the well-meaning preacher in the little church she attended had so often said. Verily, did she cry out in her agony for the merciful “rocks and mountains” of darkness and sleep to hide her away from His avenging sight!

Must this be the fate of these dear children, too? Was this cruel doctrine the theology that was being instilled into their trusting little souls from the innocent-looking little church around the corner? Those dear, sweet little ones,—so perfectly formed for happiness and joy,—could she not save them? She must! She must! Was it not for this very purpose that she had been sent to them at this time? She believed it was,—yes,

she felt within herself the assurance that it was.

But even with the assurance, as if in demoniac mockery of the thought, a new song came floating up to her, every word clear, and most painfully distinct:—

"Although a child, I've often sought
To know the way to heaven;
Of Jesus I have long been taught,
But never been forgiven.

"With sorrow deep I've ne'er confessed
How wicked I have been;
But look, O Lord, within my breast
And teach me all my sin!

"O Lord! how can I come to Thee,
All covered o'er with sin?
My wicked heart would from Thee flee,
So sinful I have been!

"Black marks of sin are on my soul,
Sin is my only dress;
My wickedness can ne'er be told,
I have no righteousness."

This, happily, seemed to end the program for the evening, and the unwilling listener upstairs breathed a sigh of the most intense relief. She

sat alone in her little room, listening to the scattering of the many little feet, as they made their way to their various rooms, and then, with an earnest prayer breathed to the Source of all Strength, that she might be given the right words at the right time and place to lift her little charges out of the darkness that was threatening to engulf them, she rose quietly and joined her sister in the little parlor below.

“Where have you been all this time, Susie?” asked her sister. “Why didn’t you come down sooner? The children were having some music, and they seemed quite lost without you to take your part in it.”

Susie looked at her sister seriously.

“I did take my part in it, Louise,—the part of a grieved and quite unwilling listener!—the only part I could possibly take in any such so-called ‘music’ as that!” she said, earnestly.

“Why, what do you mean, Sue? I thought the children sang very sweetly to-night. I always enjoy hearing them.”

“Of course they sang sweetly,—bless their dear, unstained little souls!” was the quick response. “How could they help but sing sweetly? But O Louise! Louise! what sort of thing did they sing? What sort of a thought were they in that very sweetness impressing upon

the very depths of their souls? How can you let them even read or hear such words,—let alone *say* them, or *sing* them? Do you not know what a large part all these things play in the building up of their characters? Do you not know how true it is that

‘The songs we sing, like the thoughts we bear,
Are building our lives for us, everywhere?’

Have you so far forgotten how our own young lives were shadowed by just such false teachings as these, that you can rest so contentedly while the same black cloud settles down upon your own dear innocent babies?”

Mrs. Evans looked troubled. She walked to the organ and took from the music rack the little hymnal from which they had been singing.

“It is the little book we are using in the Sunday School, Susie, and everybody seems to like the music very much. And the tunes are so easy to carry that the children pick them up very easily. It never occurred to me to criticize the book in any way.”

“Let me see it,” said Susie, and she took the book in her hand with an ill-concealed sense of scorn that was almost loathing, and turned the pages. “Poor little babies,” she said, at last, “to

be forced to take into their spiritual systems such sour-milk as this, just because it never occurred to their blind little mother to see that the food provided was properly sterilized, and that the bottles were thoroughly clean. Be very careful, my dear sister, that you do not pay such close attention to these healthy little bodies,—which God forbid that you should neglect!—that you utterly overlook the greater, more vital needs of the soul,—the spirit,—that shall animate these bodies in the future!”

She looked at the little book critically. Then she turned to the cover.

“Humph!” she said. “‘*Especially adapted for seasons of deep religious interest, to attract the lost little ones into the fold.*’ Should rather say, ‘to scare them in,’ if they were strictly truthful! What can men and women of mature minds be thinking of, to put out such a collection of poisonous rhymes and rhythms, and allow their little children to dope their easily-impressed souls with the sapping narcotic, till they are completely under its murderous power? Listen to this,—

“‘Why have I these awful longings?

Why this seeking after peace?

Why do tears flow like a fountain,

Till I cannot make them cease?

““Oh, my soul is dark as midnight,
Not one ray of light within!
I can see but the sickening horror
Of my dark and loathsome sin!”

““And I know I’ve been too wicked
For the Lord to let me in;
Jesus never can forgive me
All my foul and hideous sin!’”

“I don’t believe I ever stopped to really consider the full significance of the words before, Susie,” said Mrs. Evans, apologetically. “I really don’t. To tell the truth, my mind is so apt to be on the work of to-morrow, that I don’t take in more than the air, and—well, if it is pretty, and they carry it well, it seems to satisfy me. At least, it has never made any other sort of impression on me.”

“And you have not been horrified to listen to your children singing these terrible confessions of unpardonable sin? You have not felt any need of investigating into their daily lives and searching for the crimes they freely admit having committed?” asked Susie, almost severely.

“O Susie!—don’t! I’m fully enough roused now,—really I am! Just tell me how to correct the mistake, now that I have begun to see it!

We can't control the music of the church and Sunday School, can we? We can't tell them what they shall sing or shall not sing. We can't even forbid the children singing while they are there,—nor—nor—keep them at home!”

“I was not going to suggest any such radical measures, Louise. Don't think me such a tyrant in the enforcement of my views. But I am going to do all I can to counteract the influence by sweet, happy, uplifting songs in the home,—the very sweetest and happiest,—set to these very airs! I know they'd rather sing Auntie Sue's songs any day than these! And I'll write a song for every air, but that they shall have new associations for such really pretty melodies.”

And with this plan in view as the best possible solution of the problem for the present, the sisters separated for the night,—Mrs. Evans to wonder at her past blindness, and Susie to further outline her plans for the enlightenment of the days to come.

CHAPTER VI

THE REAL SELF

ALL the next day, there was an eager, excited state of mind very easy to see and read below the words and acts of each of the children, as they went about the little duties of the day, and frisked at their games and sports about the yard.

They could hardly wait for night to come. Aunt Susie's fairy-tales were always so different from other people's fairy-tales. They were so well worth hearing and remembering. And had she not promised them that this was to be one they themselves might, in some queer way, perhaps, help to come true?

All through the preparing of supper, the eyes of the Evans' children followed the hands of the big clock over the mantel, wondering why they *would* persist in moving so slow? And when the meal was at last on the table, they ate so greedily, and in such evident haste, that they were all ready to push back their chairs and

get away from the table before the rest of the family had made a fair start.

But all things come to an end at last,—even the longest meal. And, at the usual hour, the dishes were cleared away, the table pushed back, and the rest of the family had been banished to the sitting-room to make room, they were told, for the eager little Johnsons, who came speedily trooping in to claim their seats.

Aunt Susie had already lighted a fire in the grate, for the evenings were always chilly in this little western village, and the flames now crackled and sparkled brightly, in a welcome of comfort and cheer. Even Bruno was stretched out on the hearth-rug, with his big brown eyes fixed upon Aunt Susie, while Ira and little Pete nestled close beside him, their small fingers always busy with his shaggy coat, as their heads rested close together upon his broad back.

As the bright, warm light fell in a rosy reflection upon the fourteen eager faces, Aunt Susie breathed a prayer that some word of hers might plant some seed-thought, however small, in each little soul, that the years might nurse into wonderful growth of thought or deed! And Aunt Susie knew, too, that every earnest prayer, made in faith believing, is answered in the very hour of its breath!

"Where does the fire come from, Auntie Sue?" asked Pete, suddenly. Pete was a great talker, for a boy of his years, but his mother and the others often said that he seldom had anything but a question on his lips, and usually a question that no one in earth or heaven could answer. Even his eyes, when he turned them upon you, were so full of big, unanswerable questions that they made you feel uneasy, somehow, with the fathomless depths of their great wonder. That is, this is the way it was when he was not engaged in spinning some of those wonderful stories for which he was so famous. Then his little tongue really seemed hung in the middle, and loaded with fantastical tales at both ends, with no spot or place for the introduction of any sort of a question.

"Whence came those stories?" Auntie Sue asked herself, as she now looked down into his eager little face. "Might it not be that the blessed baby finding no answers to his questions in all the world, had set out to settle a few of them for himself?"

"Where does the fire come from?" he had just asked, and several of the children had chimed at once, in answer,

"Out of the wood, of course!"

“But how does it get in the wood in the first place?” the little fellow persisted.

Aunt Susie looked smilingly around her little circle, but for this, no one had an answer.

“All through the tree’s life-time, dear,” she answered, “it has been drinking in the bright, warm rays of sunshine, and storing up in all its branches and twigs, the heat and light of summer, together with the warm food it draws from the ground where its feet are planted, from the air all around its head and trunk, and even from the rains and the dews that give it drink. All these things give it heat in some form or other, that it may store it up in all its parts, until the time comes for it to give it all out to the world again to make some little boy ‘comfy’ and happy, as it is doing to-night. That is the work it has to do in the world, you see, dear, just as we all have some work of our very own to do.”

“Work of our very own, Auntie Sue? What do you mean?” asked Hattie.

“Don’t tell Hattie anything about work, Auntie Sue,” said Will, with the instinctive desire to “bully” and tease, ever to the front. “She doesn’t like it a bit. She’ll lie right down beside it and go to sleep.”

“O no, Will,—no! I am sure when Hattie once knows how very important it is to the growth

and development of the whole world that each one of us should attend with all possible faithfulness and care to our own little part of the work, she will not go to sleep over it, but will put forth every effort to do her very best, knowing that it is certainly well 'worth doing at all.' and so, according to the old saying, 'worth doing well.' And just as our mammas and our papas give us little tasks of our own to do every day, just as you each have your own chores to attend to, so the great Master of Life has given us each our own part of the work to do, and we must either do it fully and properly, or receive the punishment we bring upon ourselves by shirking it."

"But, Auntie Sue," asked Ethel, "how are we to know what work we may have to do-by-and-bye? How will we find out?"

"That is just what I was coming to, Ethel," smiled Aunt Susie, in reply, "and I am glad you asked the question. It is not for us to really know, now, any more than the tree knew all through the long years of its making ready. It is just for us to store up all the strength and goodness and love and wisdom that we can drink into our souls from all Nature and life, and make it all as much a part of ourselves as this fire was a part of the wood, though we did not, perhaps,

know it until the time came for it to give it out to us. Then, when our time comes to give out to the world all that we have stored up within us, we shall have no trouble in knowing just what form the giving out is to take. The task that comes to us to-day is the one important work to be done to-day, and by always doing the one thing nearest to us in the path, we keep the road cleared ahead for the duties that lay beyond. Do you understand, dear? When we are ready, the work will be ready."

"But when must we begin to get ready?" asked Henry.

"You have already begun, dear boy. We begin to get ready, just as soon as we begin to *think*."

"To think?" asked several in a breath.

"Why, we always think," said Olive.

"Do we?" asked Aunt Susie. "Are you sure we always think? It seems to me that if we did, we would not say some of the things we say, nor do some of the things we do. We would know that we were nailing all these things fast into the very selves that we were trying to build up, and we would be more careful what kind of material we put into them."

"But what do you mean by 'building up selves,' Auntie Sue," asked Frank. "Are we really doing that? And how should we go at it?"

“That is just what I want to tell you, Frank. But I like to have you ask questions,—all of you. I can tell from that what you most wish to know, you see, and find out just what it is that you are most needing to use at this particular place in your building. In the first place, we shall have to go back to our little talk in the woods yesterday, when you all told me what very bad children you are,” she said with a smile that robbed the words of any bitterness. “Do you remember?”

“Yes,” came in one breath from them all. But their faces flushed to even a rosier red than the firelight had given them. They loved Auntie Sue so much, and they did want her to think well of them. They could not bear to have her, of all the other people they knew, know how very naughty they were!

“Well, I want you all, the very first thing, to get rid of that idea, wherever it came from,” said Aunt Susie. “You are not naughty. You have never been naughty.”

The children looked at one another in wonder. Surely, Aunt Susie would not tell them anything that was not true, and yet, this was very hard to believe. Besides, everybody else knew just how bad they had always been. It must be that Auntie did not yet know the full extent of their bad, bad deeds!

"Why, Auntie," began Frank, with a troubled voice, "you know——"

"Yes, yes, I know all that you all told me yesterday, and I don't want to hear a single word of it again, for I am going to forget all about it, and I want every one of you to forget it, too, just as quickly as possible. Those things you told me, my dears, were not your real selves at all. Your real selves are good, true, sweet, and pure,—never forget that!"

"But when I'm so bad and 'sassy,' and talk back to folks, you know, Auntie Sue," began little Ira, sitting up straight and looking her full in the face. "Don't you fink——"

"You are not bad, dear,—never! It is not you that is bad!" she assured him.

"Then why do we do bad things?" asked Oma, wistfully. "They are bad things that we do, aren't they, Auntie Sue?"

"Yes, dear, the things are bad,—very bad. I have no excuse at all for their badness. But it is the bad thoughts that get hold of you sometimes that make you do them, before your real, good little selves get a chance to put a stop to it all, do you see?"

"Why, I don't know," said Edna. "Where do the bad thoughts come from?"

"From many places, dear. From bad habits

of thinking,—bad words you have heard,—bad things you see others do, and so, do yourselves without stopping to think how bad they are. Bad thoughts are like the measles,—when the germs are in the air, if we hold ourselves open to them, we are any of us liable to catch them. Are you never sorry at all, after you do bad things?”

“Always!” came in chorus from fourteen penitent voices.

“Well, did you not know that it is your real self that was sorry,—the real good, true, sweet and pure You inside,—away down in your very heart,—that did not like the way the bad thoughts made you do?”

This was a new thought to the children, and their little faces brightened, as they, one by one, gradually grasped its meaning.

“You have studied all about the Creation, have you not,—all of you? You remember how man was made?”

“O yes!”

“Tell us, Will, what you remember about it.”

“God made man in His own image and likeness, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life,” repeated the boy promptly, as though he were reciting the catechism, and feeling very proud of his Biblical knowledge.

“Yes, that is right; and that real Self, my dears, is still, as it has always been, and ever must be, ‘in the image and likeness of God.’ So how could it help being all that I said,—good, and sweet, and true, and pure? It is for you to keep all the bad thoughts cleared away now, for they are like brush and rubbish piled over the real Self, you know, and keep people from finding out just how good and sweet the real You is. The pile of bad thoughts is so big, you know, that it is all they can see. How can they guess what you have hidden down under all that, till you get it raked away, and burned up?”

“People won’t believe it, anyway,” said Henry.

“O yes, they will, Henry; when you once realize it yourself,—realize it so thoroughly, that you just can’t forget it any hour of the day,—you will be surprised to see how soon other people will find it out!”

“How?” asked Olive.

“O people know what we are thinking,—much more than we have any idea that they do!”

“Why, Auntie Sue, how can they?” asked Ethel, doubtfully.

“Our thoughts go out into the air, dear,—just as our words do,—and other people’s mind catch them, just as their ears catch the sound of our words. Do you see?”

"But do they know?" asked Alice, with wide-open eyes.

"They know what you are thinking, but they do not always know why they know," answered Aunt Susie. "Every thought we send out has its influence for good or bad, and lives on, and on, and on, in somebody's mind and memory, or in the very waves of the air,—always, forever alive. Do you not all see, then, how very careful we must be what kind we send out? A little girl I know has this rule written in all her books at school,—and I am sure she follows it, too, for she is such a sweet, bright little girl that everybody is glad to have her near them,—'When you think a bad thought, send a good one right out after it!'"

"That's a fine rule, Auntie, if thoughts are really as strong things as you say," said Frank.

"And now, do you not all see what I meant when I said awhile ago that I wondered whether or not we had really begun to think?" asked Aunt Susie.

The children were silent, turning these things over and over in their minds. They had never once dreamed before that it made any difference at all what anybody thought. Of course it made a difference what they said or did,—but *thought*? That was certainly something new.

"I didn't think it mattered what a fellow

thought," said Frank, "if he only kept his thoughts to himself!"

"But you see, Frank," said Aunt Susie, "he can't possibly keep them to himself,—no, even if he lived all by himself on a desert island, in the middle of the ocean. The air would carry his thoughts across to the dwellings of men, till they found a lodging place in somebody's mind."

"But," said Henry, "I can't make out yet why you say it is the most important thing. Surely what we *say* matters more, and what we *do* matters lots more! How can it mean so terribly much what we think within our own minds?"

"Do you not have to think before you speak?—do you not think about a thing before you do it?"

"Of course!"

"Then thoughts must be the eggs out of which are hatched everything that you say or do, mustn't they? And if you always think right, won't you always be sure to talk right, and act right?"

"Sure!" came from several voices at once, as the truth burst full upon their little groping minds.

"It is just another way, my dears, to put the old text, 'Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaketh,' and that other even more significant one, 'As a man thinketh in his heart,

so is he!’ It means, ‘As a boy thinketh,’ or ‘As a girl thinketh,’ too, you know, just exactly as much. And the thoughts you think now, are building up those real selves you know, into the kind of men and women you will very soon become. It all rests with you,—just you, and nobody else in all the world,—to be just the kind of a man or woman you want to be!”

“How?” came the eager question. “Tell us just how!”

But the clock was striking the hour.

“Time’s up!” said Aunt Susie. “That will have to wait for to-morrow night! I guess, anyway, you have plenty now to keep you busy thinking all day to-morrow,” she added as each little face fell, and each pair of eyes wandered accusingly to the face of the guilty clock. “The look on your faces reminds me, however, of one thing that is very necessary to the building of the right kind of a Self,—and that is sunshine. No kind of a plant will grow without it,—not even a Self. You must always be happy, cheery, sweet, and contented, bound to see the bright and glad side of everything that comes, in the face of every cloud of disappointment or discouragement that may seem to be in your sky. This is really a law, my dears, that governs the ups and downs of all human experience.”

"A law?" asked Henry, who was somewhat inclined to be very much of a law unto himself!

"Yes, a law. The words of the law are few,—only two, in fact,—but nevertheless, the law is unbending,—rigid,—and must be obeyed,—simply must! There is absolutely no way in the world of evading it, if you wish to succeed in even the smallest thing."

"Give us the law, then, Auntie Sue. If it has only two words, I am sure I can learn even a law!" said Oma, who was only seven years old, and usually found it hard to commit even the smallest thing to memory.

"I know you can, dear, if you do not know it already!" said Aunt Susie, with a smile.

"Why, Auntie Sue," protested Ralph, "what do you mean? We children don't know anything about law,—surely not Oma!"

"Nevertheless, I am quite sure you all know this one," insisted Aunt Susie. "As I said before, it is of only two words, and here they are: '*Keep Smiling.*'"

"Of course we have heard that," said Edna, with an air of importance, while they all laughed. "It's awful old, you know, Auntie Sue,—but we didn't know it was a law!"

"Then I don't suppose you have always been made to keep it," said Aunt Susie.

"I'm afraid not, Auntie Sue," admitted the child.

"Then you didn't really know it, dear. We only really, truly know what we ourselves put into practice. And yet, how could you help keeping it, I wonder, in such a bright, beautiful, sunshiny world as this is? Have you never had the Golden Text at Sunday School, 'All things work together for good to those who love God?'"

"Sure!" answered Henry. "Lots of times!"

"But you didn't really believe it,—eh?" asked Aunt Susie.

"Why, — why, — why, Auntie," stammered Frank, "of course we believe everything that is in the Bible, but I am not just sure that we quite understand it."

"Well, take my word for it, my dear, it is all truth,—a very, very beautiful truth,—and sometime you will have to admit it, even if you cannot quite see it now. And I am going to give you one of my little verses to learn to keep it always firmly fixed in your mind. I want you to say it over and over to yourself whenever you are tempted, even for one minute,—whatever may come, or seem to be coming, mind you!—to obey the great law of two words, and just, all the time, '*Keep Smiling!*' Here is the verse——"

Will snatched a note-book and pencil from his

pocket, to write down the lines, as she repeated them.

"I'll give you all a copy in the morning," he said.

"O there are only four little lines," said Aunt Susie, repeating slowly, and earnestly,

"All things work together for good,
The moment you once begin
To build up your Self in the way you should,
And uncover the goodness within!"

"But we haven't had our fairy-tale yet," protested Marion.

"You shall surely have it to-morrow night, Marion," promised Aunt Susie. "We simply didn't have time for it to-night, did we? Wait a minute, while Will has his pencil and note-book handy, and let me see if I can't think of another little verse right off quick, that will help you to remember our talk to-night, and keep you from forgetting how good the real You inside you actually is. How's this?

"I was never really bad,—
That was some dark dream I had!
My real Self could never be
Anything but good, you see!

Naughty thoughts cannot have way,
When my real Self has its sway,
For the breath God breathed in me
Makes me all I ought to be.

Now, if you will all learn this, and repeat it again and again to yourself, until it becomes true to you, it will help you to forget many false ideas of things that I do not want you to remember that you ever even thought," said Aunt Susie, as they gathered around her for their good-night kiss, and then scampered away to their beds.

CHAPTER VII

THE KINGDOM OF THE SOUL

“READY for our fairy-tale, Auntie Sue!” cried the six eager voices of the youthful Johnsons in impatient chorus, the next evening, as they bounded into the Evans dining-room, fully ten minutes ahead of time.

“And I’ve learned the little poem!” cried Alice.

“So have I!” said Ralph, “both of them!”

“Pooh!” said Henry, “so have we all,—even Ira!”

“And I fink Bruno knows it, too,” said Ira.

“I shouldn’t be a bit surprised if he did,” said Aunt Susie, as she put her hands on each side of the noble animal’s head, and looked with a smile of tender understanding into the big, intelligent brown eyes. “Indeed, I am not at all sure that he may not have known it first of you all.”

Aunt Susie certainly looked very sweet and young this evening in her pretty muslin dress, with the fluttering ribbons, and the bunch of

bright roses in her belt, all from the same bush as the half-opened bud that peeped from the soft braids of her dark hair; and the children watched her in a frank, deep admiration, as she bustled about, and in a remarkably short time, had the room all arranged for the perfect enjoyment of the Children's Hour.

"And so you are all ready for your fairy-tale?" she asked. "Well, let me see. What was the question we were to answer to-night, first of all?"

"You were going to tell us how to build up ourselves into the men and women we want to grow up to be, Auntie Sue," ventured Frank, at last, seeing that none of the older children were inclined to answer.

"To be sure, Frank,—so I was!" replied Auntie Sue, as she finally seated herself in the comfortable rocker in front of the grate. "And that is just the question that the fairy-tale,—which you must all be sure to remember is a very true fairy-tale,—is to answer. Are you all ready?"

"Yes! Yes! Yes!"

Aunt Susie smiled at the eager chorus of responses, and began softly, earnestly, the beautiful story she wanted to make so real to them.

"I cannot begin this story with a 'Once upon

a time,' children," she said, "for it is a story that is taking place all the time. It is a 'really truly' story, you know, although it is a fairy-tale, and so I guess it will have to begin in an altogether different way. Let me see, how will this do?—

"Yesterday, now, and forever, there stands deep down in the very heart of every living man and woman, boy and girl, a bright and beautiful kingdom,—the Kingdom of the Soul,—where the real Self lives,—the real boy and girl, you know,—safely hidden away from everybody to whom it does not choose to show itself. In the very centre of the Kingdom, stands a big strong castle, which is called the Castle of Faith, and it is in this castle that the king lives,—the king who rules over the entire kingdom,—and, hence, over all our lives. The name of this king is Desire, and whatever he orders and commands, simply has to be. For is he not the king?"

"But, Auntie Sue,"—began Olive. And all the rest looked very ready to chime in with a chorus of questions.

"Yes, my dears, I know I am not making it very plain for little minds, but I think, after a little, I can make you understand. You all know what 'desire' means, don't you?"

"Wish," answered Will, promptly.

“Want,” said Frank, in almost the same breath.

“Yes, either ‘wish’ or ‘want’ will express it. As I said, whatever King Desire commands simply has to be! Whatever we really, truly, deeply *want* simply has to come to us. It cannot help it. Whatever we really *wish* to be, we will be. We must!”

“But, Auntie Sue,” said Hattie, “I have wanted so many things that I never got.”

“Yes,” said Alice, “and I’m very sure that I always want to be good, and to do right, and to—to—to—mind what is said to me. But—I don’t ever seem to do it!”

“That is all very true, girls, but the reason is simply this. You do not really want to, *hard* enough. Poor King Desire is too weak to enforce his orders. Why? Because you want something else just as bad, or maybe, worse, and all his powers are called into action to bring to pass what you want most. For instance, Alice, you say you want to mind what is said to you, and of course, I know that you do. But you certainly cannot want to hard enough, for if you did, you *would* mind, no matter what came up to try to draw you away, and then, it would not all end, as it so often does, in just a half-hearted want-to! The truth is, dear, you want something else

worse. You want your own way in some other direction, and you get it, simply because your King Desire,—who, you know, rules your soul kingdom, and so every act of your life,—is more strongly supported in that other direction. The main thing is, to know for sure, what you want most of all,—what is most worth while,—and then, from the Castle of Faith direct King Desire to work in the one direction until you get it!”

“But how does he do it?” asked Harry, who always wanted to know the “how” of everything.

“I was just trying to get to that, Harry. The King has a large company of Knights,—hundreds and thousands of them,—who do his every bidding, and bring all things to pass. Because of all these knights, who are always perfectly obedient to the King, there is absolutely nothing in all the world impossible for him to bring about. I wonder if any of you can tell me the name of these so-strong Knights!”

The children made several different ventures, but all of their guesses flew wide of the mark. At last, little Pete, who was sitting upon a stool at his aunt's feet, looking dreamily into the fire, as he had such an unchildlike habit of doing, said in a serious tone,

“I wonder!”

"And what is little Pifer wondering about now?" asked his aunt, as her fingers threaded his curls.

He looked up at her gravely.

"Does you mean thinks, Auntie Sue?" he asked, timidly.

His aunt pulled the little form up to her knee, and held it closely to her with a delighted thrill of tenderness.

"I most certainly 'does' mean 'thinks,'" she said, in a trembling voice. "And only to think that our baby should have been the first to guess it!"

"*Thinks?*" repeated Henry, in a bewildered tone.

"Yes, Henry,—the names of these Knights are Thoughts, and as I told you last night, Thoughts are living things, and the most powerful things in all the world. There are many, many of them who are always dressed in spotless white. These are the White Knights, or good thoughts, who make all good dreams and wishes come true. And in nearly every soul-kingdom, all over the world, I fear, there are almost as many of the Knights who wear black robes, and are the Black Knights, or bad thoughts, who bring all bad things to pass. Do you see how necessary it is, if we wish to build ourselves up to be good,

strong, useful men and women, that we should think only good thoughts—that we should instruct King Desire to send out only the White Knights to do his bidding?”

“Isn’t it fine?” said Ethel.

“But why did nobody ever tell us about it before, if it is all true?” said Ralph.

“Because, Ralph,” said Aunt Susie, “there are a great many very good and well-meaning people in the world, who have never yet found out about this wonderful Kingdom of the Soul, where King Desire and his Knights, live and rule our lives. And because they do not know, and have never given any attention to the care of the kingdom within their own souls, they have let the whole Kingdom grow up to weeds, and the rubbish-piles collect in the fields, till nobody could get to the home of their real Self without digging, and mowing a passage, for a long, long time. And their Castle of Faith is nothing but a mass of crumbling ruins, which they will have to rebuild almost from the very foundation, when they at last wake up to the real state of affairs, and turn their attention from the concerns of their material welfare to the great need of their inner life.”

“But you say that we are to direct this King Desire, Auntie Sue,” said Hattie. “How are we

to do it? If we want to be good, why aren't we good right straight off,—just as good as we want to be,—without any more fuss about it?"

"There are many reasons, dear. I know I cannot make it very plain to you in this one evening, but I want to tell you enough so that you will all know just how to go to work to at least start to build up the selves that are to be the selves of the future man and woman,—the real Self each one will have to face the big world with,—and as you all 'learn by doing,'—for you know that is the only right way to learn anything,—it will little by little become perfectly clear and plain to even the youngest of you—yes, even little Pifer, with his big 'thinks!'"

And she held the little fellow close that his big, questioning eyes might not gaze so persistently into her own.

"You see, Hattie, there are so many reasons why you cannot do just as you think you want to all in a minute. For a long time, you have all been slaves to some great big Giants——"

"Giants!" gasped several, in a breath, staring at her with all their eyes.

Yes,—Giants!—very, very big Giants! And they do not intend to let go of you very easily, either. O no, indeed! It will mean many, many battles for the White Knights, I am sure, before

a final, complete victory is gained. But when King Desire really gets in earnest, and gives his order positively, and *holds to it*, it will simply have to be!"

"But who are the Giants, Auntie," asked Marion. "I never saw any of them."

"In your case, dear, I think you are a slave to the Giant Quit,—sometimes called the Giant Give-Up-Easy! Then, there is the Giant Selfishness, the Giant Laziness,—the Giant Cowardice,—the Giant Conceit,—and all the rest of them."

She had been looking from one to the other, as she mentioned the particular Giant who held each different one in his power, and, one by one, the little heads dropped.

"I am sure," she went on hastily, "that you can think out all the others for yourselves, now that you have grasped my meaning. But, remember, children, the great big king of all the Giants is the Giant Thoughtlessness. Most people would not believe this, simply because they would not understand what a very powerful fellow he is, but it is all very true, for all that. If we were not first *thoughtless*, we would never be cruel, or cowardly, or lazy, or selfish, or conceited, or anything else that the Black Knights in our soul-kingdom so often cause us to seem to be. Indeed, if everybody always thought, you

see, and thought right, there would be no Black Knights at all, and then there could not be any Giants to annoy you all, and bind you into slavery, for the Giants are first created entirely by these same Black Knights. Besides, there are several other very important members in the household of King Desire who help him do his work, and there is a great deal more to be told you about royal life in the wonderful Castle of Faith, in the very heart of the Kingdom of the Soul. But I do not want to tell you so much about it in this one evening that you will become at all confused or mixed up in thinking it over afterward, and, as I see the clock is about to give us its five minutes warning, 'of the passing of the hour, I will try and put into a few words the main thought I want you to carry with you, and that is the main answer to your question, 'How can we build up our real selves into the men and women we want to be?' Every day will be a battle with the particular Giant that has bothered you for so long, because, of course the one great desire of your life must now be to free yourselves from being the slaves these very bad Giants have made of you. You don't any of you want to be slaves any longer, do you?"

"No-sir-ee!" The reply was unanimous and emphatic.

“Then every single day, you must make King Desire send out his White Knights to fight the Giants. At every victory they gain, the Giant will grow weaker, and the Knights will all grow stronger. At the head of the Knights, as I have not yet had an opportunity to explain properly to you, always rides the King’s very own son, Prince Will,—and he is the most powerful force in all the world when you keep him busy, *in the right* kind of work. The only fault I have with the fellow is that he rides out with the Black Knights just as valiantly and proudly as he does with the White Knights, when his father’s commands so direct him. And we must watch closely, that he is always re-enforced with only the whitest of the Knights. There is no fighter in all the soul-kingdom so faithful or enduring, no matter on which side he may be fighting, as this same brave fellow,—Prince Will!”

“Prince Will?” asked Frank, and the others looked the question they did not give verbal expression.

“Yes! Indeed, there is nothing in all the world that can conquer the human will when it is not weakened by,—well, what you might call ‘lying around, and doing nothing’ for so long. He is just like some boys and girls, and becomes lazy when he is not regularly forced to work, but

when he is once his own strong self, nothing can resist him,—not all the Giants put together! And remember, whenever King Desire sends out his Knights, Prine Will rides at the head, and it is for you to make him stick there!—for you, and you alone, can be master of your own will. He is the very strongest part of your selves, and it is he, more than any other faculty you possess, that determines what your real self is, and is yet to become.”

The clock gave its warning.

“But we haven’t had our poem,” said Ethel. “We can’t let the hour go by without that!”

“No, indeed!” chimed the others, as Will promptly felt for his book and pencil.

“Well, then, here is one that I am sure it will do you all good to learn. Just a few lines that came to me as I was thinking this afternoon how best to present the little fairy-tale, so that you could get it, clear, and straight, and plain, and not have any trouble in the understanding of it. To-morrow, you must go forth to battle with the great Giants, and begin the building of yourselves in real, live earnest; and to-morrow night, we will talk about the other members of the King’s household, so that you may know just how everything comes to pass in this wonderful Castle

of Faith in the Kingdom of the Soul. Here is the poem:

“ ‘ I am building a self!’ shouted King Desire,
 ‘ A Self that shall stand for Me!
I shall build what I choose, spite of flood or fire,—
 I can *be* what I *will* to be!

“ ‘ And when I have built up the Self I see
 In my dreams, and they’ve all come true,
All things will belong to the royal Me,—
 I can *do* what I *will* to do!’ ”

The clock chimed the hour.

“ Won’t it be a perfectly jolly little game of
‘ Let’s Pretend?’ ” said Hattie to Alice, as the
cousins said “ Good-night!”

CHAPTER VIII.

THE FIRST DAY'S BATTLE.

AUNT Susie noticed that there was not the usual eager light in the eyes of her young charges as they gathered for the Children's Hour the next evening.

She had not seen any too much of them during the day. She made it a point in her training to avoid taking any active part in the actual working-out of the fairy-tale in each little life. She wanted to teach them, first of all, to rely on themselves,—and on nobody else,—not even herself.

Besides, she could not be with them very long. She had found a mission in this pretty little village, so far from the field of her yearly labor, and a mission that was very near to her heart. But it must all be accomplished in two little months,—two little months to be balanced against so many years of wrong thinking, and wrong training, and she knew that her own mental and spiritual powers must be forced to the limit of their possibilities; while she also

knew that it was best for the little minds, so eager for the seeds that she was just as eager to sow, to begin at the very outset to depend upon their own inner forces for every battle they might have to fight, and the overthrowing of every Giant they would certainly have to face.

She did not seem to notice the look of disappointment and defeat so plainly stamped upon each little face.

"Well, what have you all to tell me to-night, I wonder?" she asked, cheerfully, as she looked expectantly around the little circle. "Have we met any bad Giants to-day? and have the little White Knights been faithful?"

"It's all gone wrong!" said Will, without looking up.

"I can't make it work at all," said Alice.

"It's awful hard," said Olive, "but I'm going to keep on trying!"

"Pshaw! I don't see a bit of use in trying," said Marion. "I think we might a whole lot better give it all up right away!"

"So old Giant Quit has still got his chains on our poor Marion boy," said Aunt Susie, with a sympathetic smile. "Well, he won't have very long, that's sure! When King Desire once gets after him in earnest, and Prince Will is thoroughly awake to his business, and gets his

Knights hustling around after him, it will be 'Good-bye, Mr. Giant Quit! and Marion won't have any more trouble from him. Won't it be fun, though, to see the old fellow run?"

They all tried to laugh, but it was a miserably poor attempt.

"But, Auntie Sue, I did shirk my work terribly," said Hattie, "when I didn't want to a single bit, and kept saying that I wouldn't, all the time!"

"Why did you then, dear?" asked Aunt Susie.

"Why I—I—I—I guess I forgot!"

"Of course! That was the Giant Thoughtlessness, you see. As I told you, he is king of all the Giants, and when you once succeed in really conquering him, the others will be very easy to overthrow!"

"I said I wouldn't get mad a single time today, too," said Frank, dolefully. "And then,—and then,—tell me, Auntie Sue, why did every single person and thing I came across try their best to stir up all the cross feelings in me? I just couldn't hold in. I got mad—O lots and lots of times, when I didn't want to, at all!"

"There were too many Black Knights against the White ones, dear. It will be easier next time!" said Auntie Sue, consolingly. "I know just how it was, for I had to fight that bad Giant

Ill-Temper through ever so many years of my life. Once in a while he stares me in the face even now, but I soon lay him low!"

"You, Auntie Sue? Surely, not you!" said Frank, brightening considerably at the thought. Surely, if Auntie Sue had had this same *Giant* to face, and had so completely floored him,—and she, a mere girl, too!—he, a strong, sturdy boy could easily master the fellow!

"Yes, indeed! You mustn't think because all my hardest battles have been fought, that I never had any. Auntie Sue has learned all that life has taught her along a harder road than she would be willing for any of your feet to travel. That is why she is so anxious for you to conquer all these Giants now, while you are young, and your Selves are so much more easily built to the pattern you choose than they could be when all the bad habits and thought-influences had been more firmly set by the years that harden the nature. The young mind is pliable and easily bent. The older mind is tough and hard, and has to be hammered into shape."

"Well, Auntie," said Ethel, "I wasn't going to cry a single time no matter how hard I got hurt. And then,—and then,—why, I never got hurt so many times, nor so badly, in all my life it seems to me as I have to-day, and I just

couldn't help it!" And the tears gathered in her eyes, even as she spoke of it.

"A good Knight to handle that situation, Ethel dear, is the brave one, '*Never-mind!*' and his chum, '*Twon't-last-long!*' There's another that used to help me bear a great many things,—he has a longer name, but he was a pretty good old Knight to me. I called him, '*Just-play-it-doesn't hurt!*' Try any of these Knights next time, Ethel, and you'll get the best of the old Giant, before he knows where he's at," said Aunt Susie.

"We fellows always say, '*Forget-it,*' Auntie Sue," said Harry.

"He's a good fellow, too," said Aunt Susie, smiling. "The soul-kingdom is just full of all sorts of such good Knights, if we do not forget to call on them when we need them."

"I kept ahead of my old Giant Selfishness all day," said Olive, mournfully, "till just before supper, Mamma gave me a piece of ginger bread,—a nice, big piece,—and I was awfully hungry, Auntie Sue,—and I saw Oma and Ira coming, and—and—and—the old Giant just dragged me off behind the shed, before I knew it to hide away from them, till I got it all eaten up. Of course I was sorry afterward,—somehow, the last few bites didn't taste a bit good,—but what's the good of being sorry afterward?"

"A great deal sometimes, Olive,—if it keeps us from letting the big Giant beat us next time," said Aunt Susie.

"I was going to be just as clean as—as—as—well, as Will, and Henry, and Frank, and the rest of 'em," said Harry, with a shame-faced air, "but somebody called me this morning before I got around to wash my ears, and I thought it wouldn't matter so much, just for once, if I let them go till noon, and then,—well, by noon, I had forgotten that I had any ears at all, I guess! Anyway, I didn't wash them!"

"The Giant Slovenliness is a very bad one, Harry dear. Nobody likes dirty boys around them at all, you know. We must keep a nice clean, neat Temple outside, or our Knights cannot keep white no matter how hard they may try," said Aunt Susie, gravely.

"I will try, Auntie Sue,—I will do better to-morrow," said he.

"Yes, I am sure you will," she answered, encouragingly.

"I was pretty nice to folks to-day, Auntie Sue," said Ira, "but I did talk back to Alice just a little, when she knocked my big train over."

"I tried to mind," said Alice, "but I didn't every single time. I—I—I didn't forget—much, Auntie Sue,—just a little!"

"And to-morrow, you won't at all, then, I am sure," said Aunt Susie.

"I think I've been pretty good," said Edna. "I haven't been selfish, or rude, or disobedient, or cross, or anything like that. I never do any of those things the rest do, anyway. I never even want to."

Aunt Susie looked grave.

"If you do not even want to," at last she said, "it is not so much credit to you that you do not do them. If you do not have to face the Giant, why, how could he do you any harm?"

"It was a conceited thing for me to say, wasn't it, Auntie Sue?" the little girl admitted at once. "I might have known that old Giant Conceit would get hold of me sometime before night. But I really think I have kept out of his clutches more than usual, Auntie Sue."

"I hope so, dear!" was Aunt Susie's only reply.

"Auntie Sue," said Henry, who had been thinking very deeply ever since the conversation had commenced. "You say Prince Will is a very good fellow, but, don't you think I have too much of him?—a little more than my share? I just can't seem to give up my own way, you know, in anything."

"I told you, dear, that he worked just as bravely on the side of the Black Knights as he did

of the White ones. I do not think you have a single bit too much of a will,—no, indeed,—but you have simply let him get out from under your thumb. He is not your servant now, you see, but you are his. He does just as he likes with you. What you must do is to master him completely, make him do just as you say, and never give in to him an inch,—then, what a forceful man you will make. I know men, high up in the world's work, my boy, and honored and respected by all men, who would give much for such a Prince Will as you already have,—who have worked all their lives to train their own, but who lack the natural force of yours. But don't let him get away from you, Henry. Learn to govern him wisely and well, and I shall have no uneasiness over your future, for you can rise to any height in all the world.”

“I guess I must be lazy, like Hattie,” said Ralph, as Henry raised his head, with an air of resolution that it did his Aunt Susie good to see. “I had a little job to do to-day, and I said the very first thing this morning, that I would do it right away. Well, Auntie Sue, I just kept putting it off, and putting it off, and then,—then,—well, it came night after awhile, and I had forgotten all about it, you see, and so,—so,—it isn't done yet!”

“That is the Giant Procrastination, Ralph

dear! A long name, isn't it? But he's such a very big, bad, black old fellow, that I think we may be pardoned for calling him such a bad name. You can call him Giant Put-it-off, for short, if you want to, till we get rid of him!"

And at last little Pete looked up, with two big tears hanging from his long lashes, and said,

"I didn't want to tell a single lie this whole long day, Aunt Susie,—really, I didn't! But I just did tell a—a—a whopper!"

And the little chin quivered.

"That must have been the work of the Black Knights, dear," said Aunt Susie. "It wasn't the real, dear boy at all. And now, the real Pifer is ever so sorry, I can see it in his eyes, where the nice, sweet, true boy is looking at Auntie Sue out of the windows!"

And the comforted little fellow crept closer to her, and laid his head in her lap with a big sob. Surely, it was a very big sorrow to the baby that he was. And Aunt Susie's heart ached for the sorrow she felt, but had not yet been able to understand. He was, in some way, so different from the rest of the children. What was it?

CHAPTER IX

THE LAW OF SUPPLY AND DEMAND.

BUT, 'Auntie Sue,' said Edna, after a brief pause, while all hesitated to break in upon 'Aunt Susie's thoughts, so evidently busy with the confession of poor little Pete. "Why did we fail?"

"You did not fail," replied 'Aunt Susie, quietly.

"What?" came in unison from the half-disheartened throng. This was certainly the very last thing that they had expected to hear.

"Of course you didn't fail," repeated 'Aunt Susie. "How can any of you tell how much weaker every single one of those old Giants may be, because of the efforts of the force of Knights that King Desire sent out to fight against them?"

"But we didn't—any of us,"—began Olive.

"Oh of course you didn't overthrow them, entirely. Did you expect to do anything like that in one day?—after the years they have put in,

getting strong, and winding their big chains around you? Bless you, dear, there are still several big, black Giants that I have to meet every day of my life, and see how many years I have been fighting!”

“You, Auntie Sue?”

“To be sure,—why not I? And do I give up? Never! Of course, I have long years ago got the best of the same Giants that you are fighting now, but there are others in the world, for big folks to face, that are just as black and terrifying. But we have to keep up the fight! Why, how many wars would ever be fought to a finish, do you think, if all the soldiers laid down their guns at the first lost battle, because they didn’t entirely conquer the foe? Nonsense! it takes a defeat or two to arouse a man’s fighting blood!”

“But, Auntie Sue,” continued Alice, “why didn’t we win right away, when we wanted to so much?”

“King Desire was too weak, dear, and Prince Will had been allowed to lie around so long that he was stiff and sore and awkward, and didn’t like to work. So the Knights, faithful little fellows as they were, had nobody to lead them properly, you see, and so they ran uncertainly about, here, there, and everywhere, trying hard to do

their duty but not really accomplishing very much. Then, you wanted something else, too, you see, so King Desire had to send some of his Knights in one direction, and some in another, and that scattered his forces so badly, that the Giants, with their Black Knights, were altogether too strong for his few men. Besides,—and here, my dears, is a very strong point for you to consider,—are you sure that you really believed with all your might that they would win?”

“Believe?” asked Edna.

“Of course! Did you have the right kind of faith in your Knights when you sent them out? Did you say to them, ‘Go out and kill the old Giant!’ and then, *feel sure* in your own mind that they would win?—or did you say, ‘Go out, and beat that Giant, if you can!’ and then spend the time wondering if they could, and doubting and fearing as to the outcome? Your Knights must always be armed with faith,—faith that is absolutely *sure*,—or the poor fellows are soldiers trying to fight without any weapons. You know the Golden Text you have often had at Sunday School ‘According to your faith, be it unto you!’ So it is just according to how much faith you place in your Knights that they are able to bring you success. Even King Desire, all-powerful as

he is, lives always in his Castle of Faith, and sends out his orders from there, or he would be robbed of much of his strength."

"But how can we have faith, when we haven't, Auntie Sue?" asked Olive, and they all laughed at her way of putting it, but still listened intently for the answer.

"How can you help it?" Aunt Susie returned. "Do I not tell you that King Desire can not fail, when you give him strength enough? It all rests with you. You, and you alone, decide how many Knights shall be sent on every errand."

"Tell us how, Auntie Sue," said Ethel. "I must be dreadfully dull and stupid, but still, I just can't quite understand."

"Well, dear, it must be that Auntie Sue has not yet found the right words to make it quite plain. It is all so clear to my own mind, that I am afraid I must forget, now and then, just how new it all is to you!"

"Why, you tell it just beautifully, Auntie Sue," said Hattie, who would not have her adored Aunt Susie criticized, ever so little, even by herself.

"Of course you do, Auntie Sue," said Will, with a reproving glance at Ethel, who immediately sank back into her chair, and closed her

lips up tight. "It is simply that we are all very slow to learn."

"Well, I'll just keep adding a little here and there," said Aunt Susie, "until you do learn. You see, my dears, this Kingdom of the Soul, like all other kingdoms, has many laws. One of the greatest of its laws is the Law of Supply and Demand. By means of this great universal Law, there is no want in all the big world of human needs that has not somewhere the necessary thing to fill it. When you express that want, you, whether you know it or not, send the Knights out to get it. And if your Prince Will is strong enough,—that is, you understand, if you want it hard enough, and are really determined to get it,—you draw it straight to you by the power of these magical Knights. It is yours, if you want it. The mere fact that you do want it proves that it exists somewhere for you,—just for you,—and *wants you just as you want it*. Because the supply belongs to the demand, and the attraction is like the drawing power between the magnet and the needle. If there were no demand, there would be no supply, of course. Equally of course, if there were no supply, there would be no demand. The existence of each proves the existence of the other. So, as soon as you want something, you know, because you want

it, that it is waiting for you somewhere. I wonder if you understand that, children? Have I made it any plainer?"

"O yes, Auntie," said Ethel, "I am sure you have. If I want to be brave, it shows that my bravery is just somewhere else, waiting for me to call it to me."

"That's very nicely put, Ethel, and I see you do understand. And it has to come to you, too. Why? Because that want—that demand, for it is a demand,—when it is once sent out into space is a force that draws the supply,—it is so strong that all Nature falls in line to assist and bring to you the thing you want. Why, just as soon as the wish is out, the gift you ask for starts in your direction. It may be hindered on the way, and delayed by the interference of other Knights, but it will surely make its way through everything, if you keep believing in your Knights, and fill them with your faith. If you do not stick to it, but call back your Knights before they have brought it all the way to you, they stop acting at once, and get busy at the next errand you send them on. Otherwise, if you keep believing in them, and watching for them, and really, truly expecting them, they have to come. For it is a law, and they never break a law!"

"But, Auntie Sue," began Marion, doubtfully.

“Do you think we are really big enough to be really, truly good?”

“Big enough? O my dear boy! Look at our little Ira, and Pifer here,—aren’t they good?”

“But I mean,—to bring all those things to come true?”

“Of course, you are big enough. Look at the little twigs that are sometime to be trees. Isn’t it easier to make them grow straight and fine, than it is when the trunk gets harder to bend, and the limbs shoot out, maybe all twisted and knotted, in some awkward, ugly shape? The idea! You are quite big enough,—every one of you,—to bring anything on earth to pass, if you can only once fully realize it. No matter how impossible may seem the great thing you want to be, or to do, if you are big enough to imagine it, to dream of it,—to picture it in your mind,—you are plenty big enough to realize it. The White Knights that you yourself are capable of creating and sending out by the force of King Desire and Prince Will, are plenty strong enough to draw anything to you. If you can create the Knights, you can grasp their work. If you can see it in your mind, you can build it in your life!”

“I think I am beginning to see a little more how it is, Auntie Sue,” said Edna. “But I am afraid——”

“Afraid? That is just what you must not be! There are two foreign kings, one of whom is called ‘Fear,’ and the other one ‘Doubt,’ who are the very worst enemies of King Desire that any king could possibly have. Whenever they get inside his kingdom, they raise all kinds of trouble. Why, they incite the Black Knights to treason, and make even Prince Will tremble and seem weak to himself, even taking from the White Knights some of their weapons of faith and trust! It is your business to keep them out. Don’t ever, ever open the gates of your soul-kingdom to either of them,—not for a minute,—for the fairy-tale must, and *will* come true!”

“But how can we *make* ourselves believe, Auntie?” asked Henry.

“You cannot help believing when you *know* it will come true, Henry dear. You have not really proved it yet, and so you do not feel sure, but your very first victory will convince you, and after that, why, it would be the rankest treason against the faithful old king for you to let old Fear or Doubt have a peep in. I am sure, when they once see things begin to come true, that none of my wise boys and girls will ever be ‘afraid,’ or ‘doubt’ or even ‘wonder’ again. Let me give you an every-day illustration, that may help you to find it easier to ‘believe’ in the

coming true of the fairy-tale:—When you go to the telephone, and ring, you know that Central will answer, don't you? She has to. It is her business. Well, that is just the way with whatever else you desire and demand of life. You are just as much a part of the Infinite God, as that little telephone over there is a part of the great united system, that connects you with all your neighbors, and with the whole town, and country around you. When you make the connection, the response has to come. Your taking down the receiver, of course, is faith. If you don't take it down, the response cannot possibly get to your ear, though Central will be trying her best to answer your ring all the time, but you won't receive it. You say,—by your actions, at least,—‘I don't think Central heard me!’—‘I don't believe she will answer!’—‘I wonder if I really did make any connection just by turning that crank!’—and you don't listen,—you don't open your ears to receive the reply. It may sometimes be slow in reaching you, for the line may be busy, or even crossed sometimes, or your own instrument may be out of order, through improper thinking, but you must grasp the idea that the moment you ring Central, and call for your number, the vibrations from all over the universe start your way to bring you what you ask. You must *know* that

they will, just as surely as you know that Central will respond, for, take my word for it, my dears, nobody in all the universe but your own self can break the connection, or put the line out of order."

"I see, Auntie Sue,—I see!" cried Frank, eagerly. "Faith is the telephone wire that connects us with God when we pray!"

"That is just the idea, Frank. I am so glad you see what I am trying to explain. Now, just a word more about the household of King Desire. Like all other kings, he has a Prime Minister, who directs the affairs of his kingdom for him. Big people call this prime minister the Conscious Mind, the Objective Mind, or the Positive Mind,—whichever they happen to prefer, but we will call him simply the Prime Minister, or the Manager."

"The Boss!" suggested Will.

"Yes, 'the Boss' if you prefer, for that is just about what he really is. It is that part of the mind that we think with,—the part that we ourselves direct when we think,—the part with which we can deliberaely send the Knights wherever we choose. The Prime Minister, of course, does whatever King Desire orders, because, you know, we always think what our inner self desires to think. This Prime Minister, too, directs the workings of the most important ser-

vant in all the kingdom, the Steward of the Soul. This servant is called by the grown-ups the Subconscious Mind, the Subjective Mind, or the Negative mind,—but we will get along better, I think, if we call him simply the Steward.”

“But, Auntie Sue, just what is he?” asked Will.

“He is the part of the mind over which, in our waking hours, we have no sort of control whatever, and yet, everything that we do or say influences him, and he mechanically carries out whatever we impress upon him, whether of good or bad. If we always think we are bad, for instance, he accepts the idea, and makes us act bad; but if we think we are good, he has only good impulses to pass on to the Knights that direct our actions. His work is all depending upon the Mental Attitude that we hold, or the mind-picture, of ourselves and our surroundings, that we carry about with us. It is our personal point of view, or our real inner belief, that impresses him. Now, the Prime Minister directs this Steward,—tells him what to do in all the actions of the body, even every little inside part that we know nothing about ourselves, and the Steward carries out the orders. Sometimes, he has to be told over and over again, for he has no reasoning powers at all, and cannot do a thing of himself,

but he is a very faithful and obedient servant, and when it is once thoroughly impressed upon him, he never fails to do his duty."

"And are these the last two of the king's family, Auntie Sue?" asked Oma. "Are there any more of them?"

"There are two little Pages, Oma—big folks call them 'Affirmations,' but we will call them simply words. One of them is named 'I-Can,' and the other is named 'I-Will.' Their work is to keep the gates tightly closed against the bad kings, Fear and Doubt, and to wave the flags to encourage the White Knights when out on their many, many duties. Fear and Doubt are both very much afraid of these little fellows, and usually run as soon as they see them coming."

The clock had struck, but nobody but Aunt Susie had heard it. She pointed to it with a smile. It was already fifteen minutes past the hour.

"I have two rhymes for you to-night," she said, "and I guess, if Will writes rapidly, he can jot them both down. The first is on the great law I have tried to explain to you, and here it is:

"There is no demand in life, you know,
But brings with it its own supply;
Put forth your claim, then, as you go,

And catch the swift and sure reply.
No matter what your hopes and aims,
Send forth your call, so strong and clear,
That Nature must admit your claims,
And bring the ripe fruit swiftly near."

"Got that!" said Will, at last, "Now for the other, Auntie Sue!"

"It is only these four lines, to help you to see how to put the little Pages to good use:

"I will conquer every battle,
Only good my days shall fill,—
Good thoughts shall create good habits,
For *I can* win, and *I will!*"

CHAPTER X

THE LAW OF SUGGESTION

“**W**HY is it, Auntie,” asked Henry, the next evening, as they seated themselves in their places for the Children’s Hour, “that however much I may want to do a thing,—”

“Or think you do!” put in Aunt Susie, with a smile.

“Well, yes,—or think I do!” he admitted, “but isn’t that the same thing, Auntie Sue?”

“Not quite, my boy! It is very possible for you to over-estimate the strength of King Desire, and want things to happen in too many different directions, as I told you before, for his forces to be strongly enough centred upon any one point, to bring what you want to pass. You know, when you want to learn anything, you simply must concentrate all your thoughts upon it. You cannot learn one thing, while your mind is constantly wandering here and there, over everything and anything else but the thing you are trying to learn. You all need to learn the great lesson of Concentration,—bringing all your

thoughts to a certain point!—and holding them there till their work is done!”

“Well, anyway, when I make up my mind to do a thing, and, really, Auntie, with all my might, intend to do it,——”

“Yes, dear,— I know!”

“Why is somebody sure to say something to throw me off the track?”

“What do they say, Henry?”

“O such things as ‘I wouldn’t do that fool thing, if I were you!’ or ‘Goodness! you could never do that, no matter how hard you tried!’ or else they just laugh, and make fun, and say nothing! But, anyway, they manage to make me stop wanting to do it any more!”

“It happens just that way with me, too, Auntie Sue,” said Hattie.

“And me!”

“And me!”

“And me!”

“Sometimes, I am ‘thrown off the track,’ as Henry says,” said Will, “by just simply overhearing somebody, somewhere, talking about somebody else, and not meaning me at all. But I get their ideas, and knowing what I was thinking, why, of course, I change my mind. ‘The cap fits,’ I suppose,—or I think it does, and so I ‘put it on.’ Why is it, Auntie Sue?”

“Why, it is simply because your mind had not been as thoroughly made up as you thought it had. You were not *sure* what you wanted. King Desire had given his orders in a half-hearted way. And so, another of the great laws of the soul-kingdom came into operation.”

“What law, Auntie?”

“The Law of Suggestion! When people speak to us, they send their Knights to work in *our* kingdoms,—to influence our Steward,—and so, perhaps, lead him to direct our Knights to do the bidding of their king, instead of our own! They cannot do this if our Prince Will is strong enough to resist them, but, alas! there are so many times when he is not! They cannot do it, either, if our Prime Minister is on guard as he always ought to be, for they can never make any impression upon our Steward,—no, they cannot even get to him,—when the Prime Minister is doing his duty,—remaining positive and rigid at his post! But sometimes, he gets careless, or relaxes, and lies down to rest, and isn’t attending to business as he ought to be, and then, other people’s Knights get in. When the Prime Minister is asleep, or at rest, any one can influence the Steward, for he simply has to be directed, and he doesn’t care a bit where his orders come from. It is simply his business to do as he is told, who-

ever may do the telling. And that is how people so often influence us to do things we would never in all the world think of doing ourselves. They may not even say the words, at all, but by so constantly sending out the thoughts along that line, they come into vibration with ours,—by that, I mean that they get into the atmosphere where we live,—and so reach our kingdom, and in due time, succeed in carrying their messages to our Steward, and getting him to accept them. Then the mischief is done!”

“But how can they get to us, Auntie?” asked Olive.

“There are unseen lines of communication, dear, between all our soul-kingdoms,—lines over which the Knights travel from one person to another. If it were not so, I could not talk to you to make you understand, nor you to me! When I want to talk to you, King Desire sends a Knight with my message, and he immediately carries it over these little unseen lines to your Prime Minister. Your Prime Minister receives it, and then passes it on to your Steward, who puts it on file. That is how you remember. If he did not hand it over to the Steward, or if the Steward neglected to make a record of it, you would immediately forget all about it.”

“It is better than the telegraph or telephone, isn’t it, Auntie Sue?” asked Frank.

“Yes, and the time will come when we will communicate with one another in this way over many miles without a single word being spoken. We do it a great deal now. But when we learn to send out our Knights to one point in stronger forces than we do now, with a strong, vigorous, unyielding, demanding Prince Will at the head, we can do anything with our thoughts that we may determine upon.”

“What is it called, Aunt Susie?” asked Will.

“Scientists call it Telepathy, or Thought-Transference. We can call it simply mental telegraphy, if you like, for that is really exactly what it is.”

“But, Auntie Sue, do we really do it now?” asked Hattie.

“Very much, dear,—even more than we ourselves realize, or even notice! Do not you yourself often find yourself thinking of some particular friend with no reason at all for doing so, except that the thought keeps coming back again and again? You say, ‘I just can’t keep Maud out of my mind to-day, for some reason!’ but you never stop to reason it out, and get down to the ‘why’ in the matter. The real reason is, that Maud is thinking strongly of you. She is sending her Knights across the miles to you with some message, and they are hammering away at the

gates of your soul-kingdom, trying to get an entrance to your Prime Minister. He hears them in the distance, and thinks of Maud, but he doesn't get the rest of the message, and know what Maud would like to say to you, because he is too busy with other things to stop and open the gate, and so, 'be still, and know.' "

"But is there any way for us to get the message, Auntie Sue?" asked Ethel.

"I am sure, Ethel, that if, when you find the thought of some friend bothering you,—coming again and again into your mind without your calling it there,—you would just sit down or lie down, and keep real still,—relax every nerve and muscle,—stop all thinking,—really forget everything else but this friend, and let the knowledge of her personal influence fill your being,—you would actually, after a few trials, be able to let her Knights come to you, and give you her message. Just call up her picture, you know, see her in your mind's eye right in front of you, just as she always looks,—make her presence very real to you,—and listen to what thought-message comes to you. I know it can be done, for I have a number of friends who send me their messages, and who receive mine. When I go back to my work this fall, you must all practice it with me!"

"Good! Good!" came the chorus.

"Then we shall not really lose you again after all, Auntie Sue," said Oma.

"Indeed, you will not. I shall often be with you in spirit,—with my full force of Knights,—whether I am able to get my messages through to your Prime Ministers, or not!"

"But, Auntie Sue," said Henry, with an uneasy glance at the clock, "we were talking of the way in which other people influence us!"

"Yes, and it's an important thing to be considered, too,—how strong an influence just one person may wield, over even a good-sized crowd. Have you never noticed how quickly one cross, ill-tempered person may make a whole party feel mean and out-of-sorts?"

"Yes, indeed!" said they all, looking at one another, conscious of many such times in the history of their own little group.

"And, on the other hand, one who is cheerful and determined to smile, and be happy, will soon have the whole crowd smiling and merry. We are all influenced by other people's moods and thoughts more than we may really know!" said Aunt Susie.

"But, Auntie Sue, is there no way we can help letting them do it?" asked Henry, anxiously.

"To be sure there is. We do not need to let their Knights into our kingdom at all, unless we

choose. And if they do get in, we do not need to accept a single one of their messages. We should rally all of our own Knights to the support of King Desire, and just 'talk back' to them. If they say, 'You are foolish!' come back at them with a strong, firm, 'I am right!'—and *be sure to mean it when you say it*, and believe it yourself. If they say, 'You can't!' just laugh right in their faces with a defiant 'I can!' and then go right straight ahead, and prove it! No matter what anybody in the world may say or think, it can have no effect, if you keep your own Knights busy, counter-acting their suggestions by your own opposite affirmations, or spoken words. Surely, you know your own self better than any one else does. Surely, you ought to know what you want, better than they possibly can. And surely you know that your own Knights have double the force in your own kingdom that anybody else's could possibly have! And besides, if you keep busy directing King Desire, and ordering your Knights, you will not even have time to notice that anybody else's Knights are even trying to get in. When the Prime Minister is busy enough with the affairs of the soul-kingdom, he never can hear any outside noises at the gates!"

"But isn't it best to take advice sometimes from those who know more than we do?"

“Most certainly,—when your own Self recognizes its value, and accepts its truth. We were not speaking of that, were we? Nevertheless, there is really nobody but your own papas and mammas who have any authority over your life, and while you owe them the strictest obedience, you are not bound to accept the counsel of anybody else living. What I meant to impress most deeply upon your minds was this: For instance, Mamma sends you to the post-office to mail a letter. You want to do that errand at once, just as Mamma said. You are thinking of nothing else. You meet Mary. Mary says, ‘Let us go over to the bridge and watch the train pass by!’ ‘O no,’ you say, ‘I have to mail this letter for Mamma!’ Mary says, ‘Pshaw! there’s lots of time for the old letter! Come to the bridge first!’ If your Knights are weaker than hers, and Prince Will happens to be lazying around, you will go with her to the bridge, and most likely forget all about the letter, which may really have been very important, until, perhaps, it is too late altogether for the out-going mail. Then, of course, your real Self is sorry, but being sorry doesn’t put things right again, when the Black Knights have had their way.”

“I see,” said Hattie.

Alice hung her head, for something very sim-

ilar to that very thing had happened with her just a day or two before.

“And again, does not the fear of what certain friends may say or think of us,” went on Aunt Susie, “often keep us from letting our real Self express its own tastes? Do we not dress as others do, walk as others do, go when and where others go, read what they read, and all that, letting their Knights direct our lives, instead of our own?”

The children looked significantly at Hattie, for it was now her turn to hang her head, and look self-conscious. “What people think,” was a word very often on her lips, and “Everybody’s doing it,” a supreme law in her life.

“How can we keep from it?” asked Ethel, in dismay.

“Easily, my dear little girl. We will just go into our Castle of Faith, and with our strong Prince Will, and the obedient White Knights, we will build all around the Castle so strong and high a wall of divine love—God’s love,—protecting love,—that nothing can reach us,—not even a single bad thought or word or wish, or a wrong habit or action or opinion of anybody else in all the world. Maybe, I can put the idea into some sort of a rhyme,—for it is certainly rhyme-time again,—

“I will build myself a wall,
Strong and thick and broad and tall;
I will build it firmly of
God’s divine, protecting love!
Safely sheltered by this wall,
I shall hear no evil call,
For so safe my soul shall be,
No wrong thoughts can get to me!”

CHAPTER XI

THE LAW OF ATTRACTION

THE children had already begun to realize some very sweet results of their little "Game of Let's Pretend,"—quite sufficient to prove to them that it would surely "work," when properly understood and played, but when they came in for their "Children's Hour" the next evening, it was quite evident that the atmosphere had been somewhat disturbed by clouds or threatenings of storm.

"I couldn't understand at first," said Frank, "why everything I tried to do persisted in going straight the other way. But when I remembered that it was Friday, and then looked up at the calender, and discovered that it was also the thirteenth of the month, why I knew right away that I was foolish to try to do anything worth doing. Nobody could ever do anything at all on Friday the Thirteenth!" he concluded gloomily.

Aunt Susie laughed outright.

"That's just because you think so!" she said.

“O but Auntie Sue,”—began several voices in protest.

“But that is really and truly the only reason in all the world, my dears,” she said. “Not a single thing has gone ‘wrong side up’ with me. I’ve had an exceptionally happy day. You have always heard that Friday and the number thirteen were both unlucky, and you have thought it so much, and believed it so thoroughly, that—well, ‘according to your faith,’ it has been unto you, you see. Your Prime Minister, too, has so thoroughly impressed this belief upon the Steward, that the faithful little servant doesn’t make much of an effort to bring anything about, and Prince Will goes to sleep. This is a very strong proof of the power of the Knights, for it is only another result of years of wrong thinking.”

“But, Auntie Sue, don’t you believe in any signs at all?” asked Edna, staring at her aunt in undisguised wonder. An aunt who did not believe in signs!—it was something unheard-of!

“I believe that all signs are true to those who believe in them, but it is simply because their own thoughts and their own faith bring them to pass, and make them true. I do not believe that a single sign is at all true to those who do not believe in them. I believe, too, that we can rise

above them,—be stronger than they,—and not let them influence our thought in the least particular, even if we have always believed in them before. It is so weak, don't you think, to be influenced by a whim that there is really nothing to?"

"But I can't understand," protested Frank, "why it always turns out that way, if there is really nothing to it."

"It is simply, as in so many other things, the Mental Attitude you hold, dear,—the point of view you take,—the way you, yourself, look at it! Have you never noticed yet how you always get in this world just what you expect to get?—how you see everywhere just what you are looking for?"

"Why, no," said Frank, "I do not know that I have!"

"Well, you just try it and see. If you are looking for faults in your friends and playmates, and expecting them to do naughty things, you won't see anything but their faults, and everything they may say or do will seem naughty to you. On the other hand, if you just look for the good things, about those very same friends, and expect them to do nice, pleasant things, you are certain only to notice how good they are, and what nice things they do!"

“Well, that’s something worth trying, anyway,” said Olive.

“Isn’t it?” said Aunt Susie. “I wonder if you never heard about that wise queen who sent out two of her servants over the very same road, telling one of them to bring her every weed he could find, and the other one to bring her every flower! One came back, loaded down with weeds, and grumbling over the number. ‘I never saw so many weeds,’ he said. ‘And I didn’t see a single flower anywhere!’ The other was loaded with flowers. ‘There were flowers, flowers everywhere!’ he said. ‘I don’t believe that there was a single, solitary weed along the whole road. And it is always so, my dears, wherever we go. We see just what we look for. We get just what we expect.’”

“Auntie Sue,” said Harry, after a pause, “I’ve noticed lately, among the boys down town, that several different times they have begun to talk to me about the very thing that was in my mind. Wasn’t it strange?”

“Strange? Why, no,—not in the least! It was very natural, my dear boy.”

Harry opened his eyes wide.

“Natural? how’s that?” he asked. “Was it because my Knights were poking their noses into the other fellows’ kingdoms?”

“No,—not that! But it was a proof of the strong influence of your Knights. This brings us to another great law of the kingdom,—the Law of Affinity,—or, the Law of Attraction and Repulsion. You have all heard the saying, ‘like attracts like,’ but you have probably never once stopped to think what a great truth it really is,—even in the thought-realm.”

“Does it mean the same as ‘Birds of a feather flock together,’ Auntie Sue, asked Edna.

“Yes, just the same. When you send out your thoughts,—or, in other words, when King Desire sends out the Knights, into the great spaces of the universe, on any mission whatever,—they come into contact with all other Knights who are sent out on the same kind of missions,—they vibrate in harmony,—or beat in the same measure,—or play in tune,—I hardly know how best to express it,—with the Knights of their own kind,—and they all work together. When you are thinking along a certain line, everybody’s thought along that particular line helps you, because you are so open to receive it from every source. You draw it to you, because your Knights bring these other Knights to help them. That is why, too, you are instantly attracted to some people, and repelled by others,—you are drawn by this great law toward the people who are thinking the same

kind of thoughts that you are, and are pulled back from those who are thinking an opposing kind of thought. Why, everywhere I go, the people who are interested in the same things that appeal to me, are being constantly drawn into contact with me. I meet them everywhere. They just naturally gravitate toward me, attracted by my faithful little Knights, working along the same line as theirs."

"The Knights are regular magicians, aren't they, Auntie?" asked Frank, who was a great reader of all kinds of fairy tales.

"Yes, you might put it that way," she answered, "although magic is supposed to be something working against the laws of nature and defeating them, while all these wonderful laws are really the laws of nature themselves, which are just beginning to be more fully understood, and put into voluntary operation."

"Then, Auntie Sue, do you not meet the people who are not interested in the things you like?" asked Olive.

"Not often,—never intimately. You see, the Knights who are not in harmony with my certain line, who are sent out on altogether different missions than my Knights are busy about, will not mingle with my Knights at all, because there will be no sympathy between them, whatever. If

they are directly opposite, they are repelled,—driven so far back by my little Knights that they cannot get into my atmosphere at all. As you grow older, you will see more and more of this in your life. The people near you in the street-car will give you, unconsciously, some bit of information you were seeking,—some one will come to your table at the restaurant and speak, uninvited, of just what you want to know,—you will see a line in some torn and discarded bit of old newspaper on the street that will answer some question in your mind, or tell you something you need to know for some purpose or other,—some one may even be sent across the whole, wide continent to bring you a book, a poem, or a bit of music that you need. They won't know why they come,—still less why they bring anything with them, or why they meet you,—but when King Desire once gets earnestly to work, his Knights have to bring all things to pass, as the whole universal force is pressed into service, and drawn into the current of action!”

“What queer things do happen in the world!” said Oma.

“No, dear. That is a mistake. Nothing ever happens. Everything that takes place,—every simple little insignificant thing,—is the working out of some great law that we cannot see, and

may not understand. No matter how trifling you may think it is, everything is the effect of some cause somewhere.

“Nothing is meaningless,—here and there
Are fragments of life that seem incom-
plete,——

A letter,—a whisper upon the air,——

A song,—a laugh,—or a friend we meet,——
We say, ‘A strange thing happened to-day!’

Then turn aside, and at once forget:
But we little know what we careless say,
For nothing has ever ‘happened’ yet.”

“That is lovely, Auntie,—may we learn it?” asked Olive, who had a very big appetite for all kinds of rhymes, but especially Auntie Sue’s.

“Of course. But, as I was saying, when you see how the whole universe takes a hand in doing your bidding, don’t you begin to realize what important persons you are,—each and every one of you?”

“And to think we never knew it before!” said Edna.

“Look out for the Giant Conceit, Edna,” taunted Will,—“I don’t think you need anybody to tell you anything about your own importance!”

“And how about the Giant Cruelty, Will?”

reminded Aunt Susie, gently, with a sad look in her eyes.

“O I forgot again,” said Will, humbly. “Do forgive me, Edna,—please do!” he added hastily.

“Bravo!” cried Aunt Susie, clapping her hands, in real delight. “One victory for the White Knights against old Giant Cruelty, even on Friday the Thirteenth”

And they all applauded in sympathy with her approval.

“But after all we have said about the attraction of the White Knights for their kind, we must not let ourselves forget that the Black Knights, too, attract to them their own kind, just as strongly as the White ones, and bring all kinds of trouble and misfortune back to the people who send them out!”

“Nasty old Black Knights,” said Ira. “I hate ’em!”

“Well, what should we do with the Black Knights, anyway?” asked Aunt Susie, playfully, looking from one to the other. “What shall we do with the wicked, wicked fellows?”

“Burn them up,” said Ralph, promptly.

“Shoot ’em down!” said Ira, fiercely.

“Banish them!” said Marion, with an air of great wisdom. “Shut them out of the kingdom, entirely!”

“I’m afraid they’d get back in,” said little Oma, ruefully. “They’d crawl under the gate, I ’spect!”

“Just let’s make ’em all get good,” said little Pete, “and turn ’emselves into White Knights!”

“I’ll tell you what I think,” said Will, fiercely. “I’d shut them all up in a dark dungeon, in the depths of the Castle, and—and—just starve every sinner of them to death!”

“That does seem to be the best plan of all,” said Aunt Susie, thoughtfully, “for if they get nothing to feed on, they will soon die out of the kingdom altogether, and—well, we can strangle the new ones as soon as they are born!”

“O Auntie Sue! Auntie Sue! what a cruel woman you are!” said Olive, and they all laughed merrily at the idea her words called up.

CHAPTER XII

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE INDIVIDUAL

“**A**FTER all, Will, your warning to ‘Look out for the Giant Conceit!’ was not altogether out of time and place, when applied to all of us, if the Black Knights did direct the spirit of them, and make them cruel and harsh,” said Aunt Susie, after a pause. “We must all thoroughly realize that any one person in all the world is just as important as any other—just as necessary to the progress of the world,—and the growth of human endeavor! Every person is placed on earth in his own particular place for a very particular purpose. He has a part to play in the great universal scheme of things that nobody else in all the world can play in his stead. Whether that work may be to carry the hod, or to make the laws; to dig ditches, or to write books;—it is just as important a work as any other, just as fully entitled to respect and honor as the work of the president, or the general, or the preacher in his pulpit. It is not what work he does, but how he does it, that proves the kind of a man he is! And again, it is

all in our Mental Attitude,—our way of looking at him,—the color of the spectacles that we look through, as you might say, that makes him look as he does to us. When we once grasp this great truth, we will see in every human being the human soul looking forth from the eyes, craving for expression, and seeking it in the form of labor it thus dignifies by its touch. We will remember, too, that that soul was ‘breathed into his nostrils’ by the same God from whence came the ‘breath of life’ to us, and then we will know how truly lovely and lovable he is! And we cannot, then, look down on any one,—no, nor on any work we ourselves may have to do, either, however disagreeable it might otherwise have been. We will simply have no time or place for the Giant Conceit!”

“But, Auntie Sue,” asked Hattie, “aren’t there some things you have to do sometimes, that you don’t really like to do?”

“There used to be, Hattie dear,” admitted Auntie Sue, “before I had fully learned how good everything in the world is, and what good it brings to me, and does for me! Now, whatever I may have to do at any particular minute is, I know at once, the very thing I want to do just at that time, and in that place, because it is the very thing that is necessary for my building. If

I do not on the very instant, get what I like, then I at once begin to like what I get, and so make myself ready for the thing that I do like, when the little Thought-Knights of King Desire bring it to me! If it wasn't necessary for the work to be done, and just as necessary for me to do it,—why, I would not have been sent to do it at all, you see!”

“Oh Auntie Sue,” said Alice, with a sigh. “I just fairly envy you for being able to feel like that about it! I do so wish I was like you!”

“The Giant Envy is a very nasty old fellow,” said Aunt Susie, with a smile, and Alice dropped her head, as she recognized the unworthiness of her feeling. “And a very foolish old fellow, too,” added Aunt Susie, “for you see, what one person can attain, another can also attain, if he makes the same effort in the same direction. And really, dear, have I not just been trying hard to teach you that every individual is just as important, and just as worthy of all honor, as any other? The man who makes the greatest success of his life is the man who has succeeded in giving the fullest expression to his own Self,—in living the life prompted only by his own in-born nature,—in obeying the instinct within him that is trying so hard to grow,—in really being himself. Don't ever wish to be ‘Auntie Sue,’ nor ‘Mamma,’ nor

‘Hattie,’ nor ‘Olive,’ nor anybody else in all the world but just Alice, and let her real Self come out into the open, and dare to live its own full, beautiful life. Why, I would not like Frank half so well as I do, if he tried to be like Will, or Ralph, or Marion. He would not be either one thing or the other, then, but a badly mixed-up mess of thoughts, habits, and half-ideas, trying to think the thoughts, and obey the impulses and impressions that belong to some one else,—getting their Knights to do his work, instead of the ones lying fast asleep in his own soul-kingdom. Pshaw! he wouldn’t be worth a two-cent postage stamp, either to the world, to the family, or to himself.”

“I’ll never want to be anybody else again,” said Henry, resolutely. “I’ll be myself!”

“Good for Henry!” approved Aunt Susie, “and that shall be the key-note of our poem to-night, for I see it is already past time to separate:—”

“I’ll be myself,—my very Self,—

Whatever people say!

I’ll think *my* thoughts,—I’ll live *my* life,

Exactly my own way!

“Nobody’s thoughts shall get to me

To tell me what to do,

But I myself, shall learn to see,

My every wish come true!”

CHAPTER XIII.

THE LAW OF COMPENSATION.

THE next day being Saturday, and the children having been busy all day on errands here and there, and so coming more or less into contact with other children, they had all had a fair chance to face the foes of their soul-kingdoms in open battle, and nearly all of them had more than one tale of both victory and defeat to pour into Aunt Susie's ever-willing ears, when they had finally finished their evening meal, and had gathered around her for the hour that was now fully recognized by both households as the children's very own.

Will's face was very red as he listened in moody silence for some time to the experiences of the other children.

"I'd have got along all right, all day," at last he blurted out, "if it hadn't been for that miserable Fred Hastings! But he made me so mad, I could—could—could do—do—almost anything to him! I just wish that he——"

"O hush. Will, hush, my dear boy! You must

not send out to poor Fred Hastings such a curse as that terrible wish I saw in your eyes would be! Why, child, the Black Knights would fairly swarm around him, and then, when they had succeeded in working out all the evil commands of your King Desire upon him, they would come right straight back to you, didn't you know that?—and bring all the wicked curse home again! Do you not know that 'All chickens come home to roost?'—that 'with whatever measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again?' Do you not know that every single thought and wish we send out has to come home again? O never, never, never let one of us so far forget ourselves as to hate our friend, and thus brand ourselves with the curse of Cain, for, think!—'He that hateth his brother is a murderer.' Do you know why, children? Have I not already told you enough for you to understand that?"

"I suppose the hate-thoughts are so very bad, Auntie Sue, that they kill, like bad blows, or shots," said Frank, thoughtfully.

"Yes, indeed,—O very much indeed! And when you say, 'I would like to kill him!' it is just as bad *for you* as though you really did kill him, for in your heart,—in your soul-kingdom,—the great thought-realm, that is your real life,—you have already done the deed!"

Will hung his head.

“Maybe, the Bad Knights couldn’t get to him, Auntie Sue,” at last he said.

“Well, even then,” she said, very gravely, “the evil remains in you. Even if his castle is too closely barred and guarded for those murderous Black Knights of yours to force their way into his kingdom, and work out their evil designs, they will return home again, and wreak all kinds of misery and suffering upon *you*. It is always the one who sends out the Black Knights who suffers most from them. And that is another great law of the soul-kingdom,—and a very, very sure and powerful one. It is called the Law of Compensation, the Law of Retribution, or, in simpler words, the Law of Cause and Effect. It simply means, you know, that there is a ‘because’ for every ‘why’ all over the world, and that we are really accountable for every idle word and deed, every thought we think.”

“But, Auntie Sue,” protested the boy, with a shamed face, “you do not know how mean he——”

“No, and I do not want to,” interrupted Aunt Susie, quietly. “Poor Fred Hastings! I am quite sure that he is doing the very best that he knows how. If he doesn’t know any better, he is

to be pitied, and not blamed, because, you see, he alone will have it all to pay for, in some very hard way or another,—just as my poor Will will have to pay for the bad words he said, and the bad thoughts he sent out, instead of the loving words, and sweet, kind thoughts that would have helped poor Fred to see things differently, and might, perhaps, have opened his eyes a little to the truth about the great Kingdom of the Soul, with its unchanging law of kindness, and its stern command to ‘Keep Smiling.’ ”

“But, Auntie, how much am I responsible for him?” asked Will. “Is it true that I am ‘my brother’s keeper?’ ”

“You are not responsible for him at all, my boy, so long as you keep yourself out of his atmosphere,—his vibration,—his thought-realm. But the minute your Knights commence to mingle with his, you commence to be accountable for the influence you wield over his. We are our ‘brother’s keeper,’ only so far as we influence him, either by our example, our word, our deed, or our thought. You are not accountable for the acts of a single one of this group, Will, though I know you, as well as they, have somehow, become accustomed to thinking that you are. Each is his own ruler, under the laws set down by Mamma and Papa. And each is responsible

within his own self, for all that he does, and must, in some way, pay for it.”

“Do you really mean, Auntie Sue, that we always get just what we give?” asked Olive.

“Certainly I do, Olive. We get what we give,—we pay for all we get, and for all we do. Sooner or later, everything comes back to us,—be it good or evil. The same Book that said, ‘Judge not that ye be not judged,’ and ‘Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap,’ said, also, ‘Cast thy bread upon the waters, and thou shalt find it, after many days.’ O you may be very sure, boys and girls, that no good word, or thought, or deed, is ever lost, or allowed to go unrewarded; neither is any bad word, or thought, or deed harmless, nor allowed to go unpunished! As a poet of to-day says,

‘You must lie in the bed
That your own hands spread.’

Do you not see, then, how you yourself are in some way to blame for all the evil that comes to you, just as you earn, in some way, all the good that you receive? If we meet the world with a smile, it smiles back at us. If we frown, we meet frowns in return. This is something that everybody seems to find so hard to understand, and yet it is so very simple that I really cannot see

why. Life is just a mirror, and always faithfully reflects the face we bring to it; or, as we might say, an echo, that throws back at us the words and tones we send out. If we could just remember this, and see how we hurt ourselves more than anybody else by the cross, mean, ill-tempered thoughts and words we send out, we wouldn't send so many, would we?"

"No," said Will, emphatically. "And, Auntie Sue!"

"Yes, dear!"

"I am going to see Fred Hastings at Sunday School in the morning and ask him to forgive me for all I said and thought, the very first thing I do. Will that make it right, Auntie Sue?"

"Do you know just what that will be doing, Will?" she asked.

"No,—just tryig to patch it up!"

"It will be like calling back the Black Knights you have sent out with a curse, and sending out the White Knights to carry a blessing instead. That will certainly be worth while if it will only be in time to stop the work of the Black Knights before they have already done too much mischief for the White Knights to undo! It is not an easy thing to do, dear. You know Will Carleton writes,

‘Boys, flying kites, haul in their white-winged birds;
You can’t do that way when you’re flying words:
Thoughts unexpressed may sometimes fall back dead,
But God Himself can’t kill them when they’re said.’ ”

“Then it won’t do any good at all, Auntie? It can’t put things straight?” asked Will, wistfully.

“It will put them as near straight as anything ever can now, Will dear. It is the only manly thing left to be done, at any rate. This is a case where ‘an ounce of prevention’ is worth tons ‘of cure.’ But still the cure will be better for both yourself and poor Fred than the rankling sore.”

“O Auntie Sue!” cried Oma, “wouldn’t it be a dear, sweet, lovely old world, to live in, if nobody ever got mad,—if everybody was always kind and good to everybody else?”

“Yes, sweetheart,” answered Aunt Susie, “and we can make our own particular world just exactly that kind if we choose. Some day we will all have learned this, and then we will send out nothing but love, love, love, to bless everybody and everything everywhere, and then there will be no need of sadness or forgiveness, for there will be

just nothing anywhere to cause any aching hearts. Love is the one strong force that beautifies all people, all places, and all living, breathing things. And the very most wonderful thing about it is that the more of it we give out, the more we get to give, for it flows to us from every possible source, as we in turn, breathe it out to the world."

"O isn't it sweet?" asked Olive. "I'll never, never, never be selfish any more!"

"Of course not," said Aunt Susie, smiling at the little face, aglow with a new light. "And, my dears, let us all learn to love every living creature, every bird, and bee, and flower, every leaf and bud and blossom, and see how fully and quickly even the plants and animals respond."

"O Auntie Sue, just hear that clock!" said Ira, protestingly.

"Yes,—time has flown rapidly to-night. I am going to give you for your poem to-night something that I did not write myself. It is just two beautiful stanzas by a very sweet woman, Madeline Bridges. It is well known, so you may have heard it, and learned it before, but it fits the lesson of this evening so much better than anything I could string together myself, that—well, I am sure you cannot hear it too often, and it deserves to be told over and over again. I feel sure

the learning of the lines will bring home to you more forcefully still the great truth of this great Law of Compensation. It may seem a cruel law, dear children, when we keep ourselves working against its decree, but when we once bring ourselves into harmony with it, and work *with* it, instead of *against* it all the time, we will see that it is really a very sweet law, indeed, and we will learn to love it, because it will teach us how very much worth while all our efforts are,—that nothing can be lost, or thrown away,—that nothing can be done, or said, or thought in vain. The poem is called ‘Life’s Mirror,’ and it reads:

“ ‘Give love, and love to your life will flow,
A strength in your utmost need;
Have faith, and a score of hearts will show
Their faith in your word and deed.

“ ‘Give truth, and your gift will be paid in kind,
And honor will honor meet;
And a smile that is sweet will surely find
A smile that is just as sweet.

“ ‘For life is the mirror of king and slave;
’Tis just what we are, and do;
Then give to the world the best you have,
And the best will come back to you.’ ”

CHAPTER XIV

THE TEMPLE OF SILENCE

THE children had been to Sunday School, and had read over their Sunday School papers. Then they had taken a quiet little walk, and had talked in subdued Sunday tones of the sweet new world into which Aunt Susie had introduced them during this one wonderful week. The whole world looked different to them already, for they had, for the first time in all their young lives, really begun to think for themselves.

To be sure, there were hundreds of wonderful things about it that they could not any of them even begin to understand, but they honestly tried to put into practice every little rule and law, even when they did not understand, and their days had already begun to be flooded with the sunshine of a new kind of love,—a new kind of peace and harmony,—a new blessing from the infinite source of All-Good.

When the Children's Hour summoned them for their first Sunday evening in the big dining-room, they were full of many sweet and serious ques-

tions which were a great source of satisfaction to Aunt Susie, as they showed her that her efforts had already begun to bear fruit, and that the children had gone deeper down into the real truth of the beautiful philosophy of life she had been trying to teach them than even her own hopeful self had dared to dream.

“Why is my Prince Will such a weak, backboneless sort of a chap, Auntie Sue,” asked Frank, as he settled back in his chair, for the words of light and love he knew would come in answer.

“Simply because you have never tried to set him to work before my boy. You have drifted along, as circumstances seemed to direct, without any thought or care, as to which way the wind might blow, or what you might do, or say, so long as you didn’t get scolded, or punished. So, you see, poor, neglected Prince Will had a very small part to play in your life. Now, that you really want him to work, he doesn’t know just how to get at it. But he’ll learn! Spur him on for just a little while, and he’ll take hold of his business in earnest!”

“But, Auntie Sue, is there no way for us to make him strong?” asked practical Olive, who wanted things done in a minute. “Do we have to keep dinging at him, and pounding him on the back all the time?”

“No, dear, there is a way,—a sure way of bringing to us speedily all that we really desire. I have not gone very deeply into it before, because I wanted the fairy-tale of the soul-kingdom to sink deep into your heart first, until it became real to you. Then you would be better able to understand the rest of it,—the real, true source of power!”

“What is it, Auntie Sue,” asked Ethel. “Don’t you think we can understand it now?”

“Perhaps,” said Aunt Susie, looking around into their eager little faces with a silent prayer for help. “I am sure you can all understand it, if I can only tell it in such a way as will make it as clear, and plain, and real, and true, as I see it myself.”

“Of course you can, Auntie Sue,” said Oma, “you always do!”

“Well, listen then, and as I draw it for you, just as my soul sees it, will you all please try to form in your own minds the mental picture I am trying to paint in the best words I can find?”

“Of course!”

“Then,—see! In the very centre of the Castle of Faith, stands the king’s prayer-room,—his chapel,—his holy of holies,—the very inmost chamber of the soul, where nobody ever enters but himself. It is called the Temple of Silence.

As he goes into this room all by himself, and shuts the door, so that the world cannot get to him, and so that he can see nothing, and hear nothing, but the voice of his own spirit, he 'asks what he will, in faith believing,' and *his prayers are always answered*. This Temple of Silence is the real source of all his power. Why? Because it is the little inner room where he withdraws from the world to commune with his God,—the little closet where he comes into touch with the universal supply,—where he knows that he can ask 'what he will,' and 'he shall receive,'—where he learns what the great All-Father meant, when he said, 'Be still and know that I am God!'"

"But, Auntie Sue, how can he shut the door, so that he will not see and hear?" asked Alice.

"By growing very still, dear, both in body and mind. By not thinking a thought,—just literally emptying the mind of every wonder and worry,—and then, closing the eyes and ears, and being very, very still, listening to the whispers of the 'still small voice' within. Do you not remember how we are told that when we pray, we shall 'Enter into the closet, and shut the door, and there pray to our Father in secret, who heareth in secret?'"

"Why, yes," said Edna, eagerly. "That was

our Sunday School lesson just a few weeks ago."

"But our teacher didn't explain it to us in the way you do, Auntie Sue," added Olive.

"She probably didn't understand it the way I do, Olive. Her eyes had not yet been opened to the full meaning of it all! She had not found her real Self yet, in the Kingdom of the Soul."

"But when can we get time for all this, Auntie Sue," asked Frank, who considered himself a very busy boy.

"The very last thing at night is the best possible time, dear boy,—the very last thing before you go to sleep. That is the time, too, when you should give your Steward, through your Prime Minister, his orders for the next day. When all is quiet and still, and you have succeeded in altogether forgetting all the cares and worries of the day, and putting all other thoughts aside, call up the Steward in your mind, and make him a very real little fellow to you. Talk to him just exactly as you would talk to another little boy. Say to him, 'Now see here, Steward, I am a good boy! I am sweet-tempered! I am generous! I am ambitious! I am truthful!'—or whatever you most want to be, you know,—and then, tell him, 'To-morrow, I am not going to lose my temper once,—I am going to conquer the Giant Ill-Tem-

per,—I am going to be unselfish,—I am going to keep busy,—I am going to do every task I have to do, and “keep smiling” all the time I’m doing it!’—or, whatever it may be that you want to do, you know. Then, allow yourself to drift gradually off to sleep with the thought on your mind that you want him to carry out, trusting him to do just as you tell him, in the same way that you would trust any worker you had hired to do something for you, if you had any confidence in him at all. Do this, every night of your life,—get into the habit of never allowing yourself to go to sleep, without first ordering your life for the next day,—and this wonderful Steward will just bring anything to pass. He works while you are asleep, you know, and if you don’t give him some definite task to do, he is quite likely to be busy in all kinds of crazy, fantastic dreams and nightmares, that will do nobody any good. It is another case of ‘Satan finding some mischief still for idle hands to do,’ for he is sure to get into mischief if you do not keep him busy.”

Aunt Susie looked around the room anxiously.

“I wonder if I have made it all plain,” she said.

“O yes, Auntie Sue,—yes!” said Hattie eagerly. “And it is such fun! I can hardly wait to begin!”

“The last thing at night, you say, Auntie?” asked Will, thoughtfully.

“Yes, because, as I said, the Steward is more open to receive your instructions at this time, and is more easily influenced by all you say, just before the Prime Minister goes off duty for the night. That is just why I have put our Children’s Hour the last thing before bed-time, so that you will be apt to think about all the beautiful and wonderful, and yet perfectly true things, the last thing before dropping off to sleep. Then the Steward will do his work, you see, while the Prime Minister is resting, and unable to reason with him, and so, perhaps, counteract the suggestions and orders you have given him, before they are carried out!”

“It seems too good to be really true,” said Alice, dubiously.

“On the contrary, dear, it is too good *not* to be really true,” said Aunt Susie. Then, after a pause, she added, “I wonder how many of you ever build air-castles?”

“I do!” was the reply from nearly all the crowd.

“It’s a good habit,” said Aunt Susie.

“Why, Auntie Sue, we have been scolded, and scolded, and scolded for,”—began Olive.

“Sh!” said the others warningly.

“That must have been, dear,” said Aunt Susie, “by some one who did not know that air-castles

are only mind-pictures of our possibilities—mental, or thought-forms of our aims, our ambitions, our ideals! After this, while in the Temple of Silence, every night, before going to sleep, build for yourself an air-castle,—a mental picture of just the kind of a girl or boy you want to be,—of just the kind of a future Self you want to have,—of just the kind of a life you want to live! Build it as grand and fine as you choose,—you cannot have it too fine,—for, as I said once before, what you are able to picture in your mind, you are just as able to build in your life. If it is a part of your mind, it is just as surely a part of the life you are capable of living,—for it is a part of your very Self,—the real You. Build it as high as you can, paint it as bright as you choose, and then say, ‘This is the real Me! This is the life I am building for myself!’ and hold the picture firmly in your imagination, adding to it as your inner growth makes you able to see bigger and brighter things ahead. Then, draw it to you! Some day,—when you are fully ready for it, if you hold the picture, and always keep expecting it, and working toward it, day by day, it will surely come true!”

“That is the sweetest part of the whole fairy-tale, isn’t it, Auntie Sue?” said Olive. “It will come true.”

“Yes, and in this way, you will gain control of your inner Self, and so, of course, of your outer Self,—for your outer life is always what your inner life first plans. In this way, too, you will make Prince Will strong, and keep the White Knights ever ready and unfailing in the service of King Desire. And, in this way, you will be truly great, for you will have learned the one way to have absolute control over your own self, and, you know, ‘He that ruleth his spirit is greater than he that taketh a city. Surely, there can be nothing in all the world any greater than to be completely master of one’s own Self.’”

The clock struck.

“Our poem!” reminded the children in concert.

“You never let me forget that, do you?” asked Aunt Susie, with an indulgent smile. “Well, here is one I think you may find it helpful to remember and repeat,—

“Build in your dreams a future true,
And build it as you wish it, too.
Picture it often, high and fair,
And then,—just hold it always there.

“Whatever it may be, ’twill rise
To life before your very eyes,
When you are ready to receive
The gift in which you thus believe.

“Keep firm your hold on each Ideal,
Until it merges in the Real,
And in the Silence see it grow
To just that form you seek to know.

“Remember, only building thus,
Can life's attainments come to us,—
‘He who builds no castles in the air
Will build no castles anywhere!’”

CHAPTER XV,

AMONG THE GIANTS

AUNT Susie had taken a book, and finding a cozy, shady spot on the broad veranda, had settled down for an afternoon's reading. Sheltered behind the thicket of vines that clambered up to the overhanging roof, she felt quite secure from any interruption or intrusion. Listening to the carolling of the birds in the trees, and watching the little butterflies and humming-birds as they flitted about among the roses, she forgot her book entirely, and did not come back to her surroundings, till she heard the sound of voices in the yard, just a little way on the other side of the screening vines.

"I don't care what anybody says,—I'm not going to do any such thing!" That voice was certainly Henry's. "I don't have to!"

"Of course you don't have to, Henry," said Alice. "But it would certainly please Mamma, and—O that reminds me, Mamma told me to ask Aunt Louise for a stew-kettle, and—well, I'm not

going to let any old Giant get the best of me to-day! Good-bye!"

And a scurry of feet proved that Alice was putting her resolve into immediate action.

"I hadn't thought of that," said Henry. "I'll just go and do it right away. It won't hurt me, anyway, and it will give Prince Will a lesson that he needs. Come, Prince, right-about-face now, and take charge of the White Knights for a change!" And his voice rang out from a distance in a defiant, "Good-bye, old Giant Stubbornness!"

There was a thoughtful little silence on the other side of the vines. Then Aunt Susie heard, from Ralph's unmistakable little voice,

"Well, good-bye, Hattie. I've put off carrying in that wood for an hour already, and I'll not let it go another single minute. You thought you'd beat this time, didn't you, you mean old Giant, with the big hard name, but you can't do it this morning!"

"I'm going, too," said Hattie. "I have a great deal of mending to do. I don't like,—yes, I do, too, Giant Laziness,—I like to do it, because it is just the thing for me to do now, to help grow right,—and I'm going to do it right away!"

And she, too, scampered away, and for a time,

the lawn seemed to be deserted again, and Aunt Susie smiled at the little struggles to which she had been an unseen, but a deeply gratified witness. She was about to take up her book in earnest, when she heard voices in a louder key,—were they quarrelling, she wondered!

“Well, you’ve just got to do it, Mr. Frank Evans,” said Will,—“I don’t see any use in your acting so mean about it. Papa says it has to be just that way, and I simply don’t intend to fool my time away——”

“Will, I just think,—no, I don’t either, Will,—I’m not going to let the old Giant get inside my kingdom to-day, whatever may come. I’ll do it, if you think it’s my place. It’s not worth losing my temper about, anyway, and I won’t,—so there, Giant Ill-Temper, take that!” and Frank’s voice took on such a note of determination, that Aunt Susie smiled proudly, as she listened.

“You’re right, Frank. We won’t let the Giants come between us. Papa told me to do it, anyway, so of course, it’s my work,—not yours! I am not going to have another failure to report to-night, either, Mr. Giant! I’ll go right off and do it, before I forget!” said Will, in an altogether different tone.

“But I’d just as soon do it, Will, if you want——”

“No, it’s my work. I’m responsible for it!” and Will evidently started on his mission.

“But, Will, wait a minute. I haven’t another thing to do, and I’d really like to help you, if you’ll let me. If we both work together, it won’t take so long, and——”

“That’s mighty good of you, Frank. Come on!”

And the voices died away in the direction of the barn. But the silence did not last long, for in a moment, another voice was heard, and Aunt Susie listened intently, while Olive asked, in real concern,

“O did you hurt you, Ethel?”

“N-o-o-o! Of course I didn’t!—I’ll play I didn’t, anyway. It won’t last long, if I just never mind!” and the brave little voice was making a desperate struggle to stifle the tears that seemed bound to come.

“You’re getting just awful brave, Ethel. Come on up to the house, and I’ll let you play with my big doll all the afternoon,” said Olive.

“What, Olive?—Not Rosamund?” asked Ethel, quite forgetting the hurt at once. “Why, you said you would never——”

“Yes, I know I did, Ethel. But that was when the old Giant Selfishness had all his old chains on me. I’m breaking them now, you see, and—and—and—I’d just as soon you’d take Rosamund

as not,—I—I—I think I'd rather you did, Ethel,—yes, I want you to,—honest Injun, I do!"

And away they ran to find the cherished dolly Olive had always until now kept so exclusively to herself.

"You're just a nasty, stuck-up thing, Edna Johnson," said the voice of little Ira, "and I don't like—O yes, I do like you, too, and I don't think you're a bit naughty. I forgot all about that nasty Giant, and he just most made me be bad, didn't he, Edna?"

"Yes, Ira, and I was stuck-up, too, I guess, for the bad Giant was after me, too. But I won't let him get any closer. I'm not a bit better, or smarter, nor nicer than—than—anybody,—no, not even than Bruno! Let's go and swing!"

And another battle was thus brought to a decided victory for two. Aunt Susie smiled, as she thought that she would not need to ask for any reports from the battle-field to-night. After a brief moment of meditation, she arose and put up her book, thinking she would go over to the home of the Johnson's, and have a little talk with her sister. She was not letting any chance slip to advise with the mothers, and instil as many of her ideas into their minds as they were ready to receive. She wanted them both to be able to continue the work she had begun, when her time

had come to leave her little charges behind; and the mothers were just as eager for her counsel along these lines as she was anxious to give it, for they had already been forced to admit the real value of her method of training, and wanted to learn as much about it as they could.

Just as she reached the fence, she heard the prattle of little Pete, on the other side, and she looked through cautiously. There, in the lane, lay a dead chicken, and standing beside it, looking first at the poor, lifeless bird, and then at little Pete, who bent accusingly over him, was a very guilty Bruno. As a puppy, Bruno had been considerably tempted by the nearness of the poultry-yard, but since he had grown to full-fledged doghood, they had thought the old habit had been thoroughly overcome. Evidently, he had again given in to the old puppy taste for young chicken, and Pete had caught him in the act, but too late to save the life of the innocent victim.

Aunt Susie listened, silently, as the little voice went on.

"Bruno, you is a good dog," he said, sweetly. "You wants to be kind and good, and so you is, but you just didn't seem to want it hard enough dis time, did you, poor doggie? You wanted the chicken worser, I'm 'fraid! The bad Giant got the best of you this time, 'cause you didn't send

out White Thinks enough to kill him dead. Your Thinks was black and bad, Bruno, I's 'fraid! Next time, just be sure to want to be a good, kind dog, worser than you wants the chicken, then the old Giant can't make a slave out of you like this, you see!"

The little fellow leaned over and stroked the feathers of the dead fowl.

"Poor little chicken!" he said, with real pity in his baby voice. "It didn't want to die a single bit, Bruno. Maybe it wasn't weady to go to Heaven at all!" Then, noticing the drooping tail of the dog, and the look of real sorrow in the big eyes, he threw his arms around the shaggy neck. "Poor doggie!" he said. "It wasn't the real Bruno at all, was it? No, the real Bruno is sorry,—awful sorry! Pete's sorry, too!—so sorry! 'Cause the bad Thinks is—is—is—so bad to Bruno and Pete!"

As the little voice broke, Aunt Susie hurried away, for her eyes were full of tears. As she passed the shed, before entering the Johnson kitchen, she heard Marion, busy at some little task, and almost laughed aloud at the accompaniment he was chanting to his work.

"No, I ain't a-goin' to quit,—so I ain't! I am going to stick tight,—tight,—tight—! No, I ain' a-goin' to quit, Mr. Giant!—so I ain't! And you'd better take yourself out o' sight!"

She wondered if he recognized the rhyme and rhythm of his song, or if he was too much occupied with the "rhyme and reason" to think of the form of the words. Certainly, his voice proved that he was very much in earnest. Just inside the hall, too, she heard another voice from the adjoining bedroom, that she recognized as belonging to little Oma. She did not look in, but she pictured to herself the little scene that she knew was taking place, as she heard the determined words:

"You know you wanted me to wear the pretty red ribbon," she said, "you horrid old Giant Pride!—'cause, then, you thought you'd have your nasty old chains fastened all the tighter on me! But I didn't put it on! And I won't! And you just can't make me, either, 'cause my nice White Knights won't let you. I'm going to brush all the nice curls out of my hair, and braid it all up tight and close, and then tie it with this nasty old black ribbon, so I am, and then I'm going to put on my very worstest dress, that's what I am, and—and—that's the way I'll just fix you, old Giant Pride! So there, now!"

Aunt Susie hurried away. She re-entered the Evans' home, about an hour later, just as Harry came bounding in behind her.

"O Aunt Susie!" he said, "Are you back?"

That's bully! I just came back,"—here his head drooped bashfully, and he looked a little sheepish, as he lowered his voice,—“well, you see I forgot to wash my neck, until I got 'most down town, and I just ran back as fast as I could for fear the old Giant would drag me the other way. And now, I'm just going to put on a clean waist, too, and comb my hair over. I'll fix him!”

And he hurried on to the bath-room, while Aunt Susie hunted up her sister, to relate, in her own interesting way, some of the incidents she had witnessed.

“You are doing wonders with them all, Susie,” said Louise. “I am only hoping and praying that I may find the right way to carry on your work when you have gone away from us again!”

CHAPTER XVI

DAY DREAMS

ANOTHER week had passed away,—another precious week of Aunt Susie's visit. She had not tried to present any new thoughts, but had led them out to talk of their own experiences, and had simply explained more clearly, adding here and there a necessary word of illustration, the working out of the lessons she had already given them, assisting them to sink deeper and deeper into the little minds.

She was very much pleased at the way they had taken hold of all she had told them, and more pleased to see how real a part of their lives the bringing true of the fairy-tale had already become. If she could only make it hold so fast that they would not let go, after she had left them!

The parents had witnessed with genuine astonishment the changes that had so soon taken place in the outer lives of their children. They could not help seeing the eagerness with which

they had attacked their daily tasks so different from their former forced obedience to an unwelcome command, nor could they fail to notice the earnestness with which even the youngest ones were trying to get the better of their old habits of thought and act, and to rise above the friction of every day's occasional discouragements. The great law of "Keep Smiling" was making itself felt everywhere and all the time.

Quarrels were infrequent, and were always sure to end in an acknowledgment of wrong on both sides, before any great clash of swords. They repeated their little verses until even the parents had memorized them, from being forced to listen to them so often. The spiritual atmosphere of both homes had certainly been changed just as the air is freshened and purified by the throwing wide open of doors and windows.

And Aunt Susie was keeping the promise she had made to herself, and was not letting the mothers escape their lawful share of the contagion. She grasped every opportunity of dropping a word here or there that might help to open the eyes of her custom-blinded sisters to a better way of thinking, and a nobler building up of life. She had not told them the fairy-tale,—that was just for the children, except as they themselves chose to take their parents into

their confidence,—but the beautiful philosophy that she was living every day of her life was one that was simply bound to creep here and there into even the most commonplace conversation, and so they were gradually absorbing into their own lives the subtle suggestions,—the seed-thoughts—that were sometime so sure to germinate and grow. For does not the poet say,

“ We are sowing, daily sowing
Countless seeds of good or ill;
And a power beyond our knowing
Nurses them with patient skill:
By a whisper sow we blessings.
By a breath we scatter strife;
In our thoughts and looks and actions
Lie the seeds of death or life.”

Now and then, Aunt Susie had found herself the unseen witness to just such little struggles as on the eventful day of the last chapter, and it had, indeed, done her good to see Hattie conquer her lazy inclinations, Ethel close her lips tightly together and force back the tears at some sudden hurt to her sensitive little body, Olive display the most marked unselfishness, while Alice had formed the habit of flying promptly at her mother's call, and Edna grew

very humble, and "meek, and lowly of spirit." Even little Ira made wonderful efforts to be polite, and Frank's heroic battles with his quick temper were a fine thing to see.

"I've stopped eating pepper, Auntie Sue," he would say, laughingly, "so you see, the old Giant hasn't any fire to feed on!"

As for Oma, she did not spend nearly so much of her time dancing before the mirror, and admiring the dainty little image it reflected, and little Pete would say,

"I saw a big——no, I didn't, either Mr. Giant! I didn't see a thing,—so there!"

And Aunt Susie had watched this fellow closely. She had felt that there was something in his case that she did not yet understand. He did not tell any naughty stories for any personal good that came to himself. It was never to escape punishment, nor to receive any reward. Then why?

One day, Aunt Susie had come upon him, lying out on the green grass of the front lawn, staring with wide-open eyes at the tops of the trees above him.

"What are you looking at, Pifer?" she asked cheerily, as she drew near. "Tell Aunt Susie what you see!"

Pete started and sat up, rubbing his eyes briskly.

“Why, Auntie Sue, I saw—I saw”——then he stopped, and turned red, and dropped his head in shame. “No, Auntie Sue, it was just a lie,—a naughty, wicked, bad lie! I didn’t see a thing,—not a thing!”

Aunt Susie sat down beside him, and drew the little form close to her.

“No, dear, no! I don’t think it was a lie at all. I think it must have been a very pretty picture,—a dream-picture,—a vision! Tell Auntie Sue all about it!”

And thus encouraged, the little fellow began,

“Why, Auntie, I saw—I mean, I thought I saw,—a little girl, with curls,—O such long, yellow curls!—tied with a big, blue ribbon,—and a white dress, and shoes, and stockings, and a big sash,—just like Oma’s, only blue, like the pretty sky! and,—and,—she came and talked to me, and she said to me, ‘Come with me, Pifer, and I’ll show you just lots and lots of pretty things,—O such pretty, pretty things!’ and then,—then,—then, Auntie Sue, she took my hand,—I mean, I thought she did,—and we went away off by the big, big lake where all the big boats are, you know, and she showed me,——”

And in a dreamy tone, the little baby voice

went on, and on, and on, till he had told the whole story.

"It was such a pretty thing to see, Auntie Sue," at last he added, wistfully, "to be all just a nasty, naughty lie!"

"But it wasn't a lie, my darling little Pifer,—it wasn't a lie at all!"

The little eyes opened wide, while a sudden light sparkled like a star in their depths.

"Then what was it, Auntie Sue?" he asked.

"It was a dream, dear,—a very lovely dream!"

"But, Auntie Sue, I wasn't asleep,—I know I wasn't!"

"No,—I know you weren't asleep. This was a day-dream,—a vision—just a little journey of that little Self that lives away down inside the Kingdom of the Soul I have told you so much about!"

"Then it wasn't really naughty, Auntie Sue?—it wasn't really so wicked?"

The wistful tone in the little voice went straight to her tender heart. The eager yearning in the wondering eyes was really pitiful to see.

"Naughty? Most certainly not, dear!—never! never! Don't ever let the Black Knight's make you think anything like that again!"

And she kissed the quivering lips as they trembled in a glad, wistful smile.

Mrs. Evans stepped out on the veranda, and her sister joined her there.

"Has Pete been entertaining you with some of those everlasting lies of his?" asked the mother with a laugh that ended in a sigh. "It does seem as though nothing in the world would ever cure that young one of that dreadful habit. Do you think he will ever outgrow it?"

Aunt Susie looked at her gravely.

"I hope not, Louise," she answered, very seriously.

"Why, what can you mean?" asked her sister. "Don't you think it is the most aggravating sin that can get hold of a child?"

"Come into the house, Louise," was her only answer. "I want to talk to you about our little Pifer."

Mrs. Evans followed her, obediently, wondering what in the world could possibly be coming upon her now.

"Our little boy does not tell lies, Louise," began Susie, almost sternly, as they seated themselves near an open window, where the bright afternoon sun came streaming in.

"What?"

"No, he doesn't tell lies at all. Have you ever known him to tell any bad stories about the other children, or deny anything he had done, or make

any false reports of any daily happenings, Louise?"

"Why,—no,—I don't remember that I ever have," said the mother, thoughtfully.

"These wonderful tales of his own experiences are all the lies you have caught him in, then, as I understand it," insisted Aunt Susie.

"Yes," replied the mother.

"Then he has told no lies, my dear sister, and you simply must not tell him any more that he has,—nor let anybody else accuse him of it, or—or—well, you may do more mischief to his life than you can possibly realize! You simply do not understand the baby at all!"

"But, Susie, he says,—O you can't imagine all the things he says sometimes,—and,—and—where in the world,"—began Mrs. Evans, greatly perturbed by her sister's words.

"He simply has experiences, Louise,—beautiful experiences, and very real ones,—that you and the others cannot possibly understand. The boy is a genius, sister dear,—the sort of a genius out of which poets, authors, artists, musicians, and all great dream-workers are made. Don't spoil it all! Don't, I pray you!—nor let anybody else!"

"I don't know what you mean yet, Susie. Pete certainly has a very vivid imagination, if that is

what you mean," said the mother, doubtfully, "but——"

"It is *not* imagination, Louise,—not in the least. He does make up the stories that he tells. He has companions that you cannot see. He has visits from unseen forces of the air. He has more with him when you think he is all alone than at any other time, and they tell him beautiful things. His little spirit really wanders with them over all these wonderful places that he tells about, and his inner eye sees all the things he tries to picture to us less-fortunate creatures. Do not doubt him! Do not make him think it is all so wrong and wicked, when it is really so very beautiful. If you do, Louise, I warn you right here and now, that you may not only ruin the little life utterly, but you may really cut it off all together.

Mrs. Evans was now truly alarmed. She knew her sister had some very peculiar ideas. Nevertheless, she knew that she was absolutely truthful, and would not tell anything that she did not absolutely know to be a fact. She knew, too, how her sister loved the little boy, and had noticed how closely she had been studying him ever since she came to them.

"But how can we meet the situation, Susie? What can we say to the child? Or what can we

do? Shall we just let it go on and on, wherever it may lead?"

"Yes,—simply see as little of it as possible! School-life, when he begins to go, will help to direct it into proper channels. I would not have you coax it, or nurse it into any more active life, but just let it develop itself in its own way. It is a Higher Power than either yours or mine that is at work in the little fellow's life, and we can trust it to mould aright whatever may be in store for him. In the meantime, let him tell his stories, whenever the impulse seizes him. He needs the chance of expression. It will do him far more hurt to shut them all up within himself. Do not refuse him this means of outlet, or drive him to poor old Bruno for a confidante. Meet the telling of every experience in a matter-of-fact way, as though it was nothing at all out of the ordinary. Say, 'That was a very lovely story, Pete. Where did you hear it?' or 'Who told you that?' and let him see that you are interested, that you do not frown upon what means so much to him, and is really, at present, at least, the larger half of his life. The child lives in two worlds, Louise. And, really, he tells his little stories very sweetly, don't you think?"

"Yes, of course, but——"

“Yes, of course, without any ‘*but*’ Louise! Be very careful how you treat the matter!”

At the Children’s Hour that night, Aunt Susie explained to them as much as she thought best for them to know of the great Giant they had seen in little Pete’s path, which had turned out to be an angel in disguise. They looked at him with a sudden sense of awe, and a new tenderness, as she gave them these lines for their evening poem:

“There are strange, mystic forces around us;
There are angels our eyes cannot see;
Their influences daily surround us,
Wherever our pathway may be!
They whisper their messages to us,
And they grieve that we seem not to hear,
While we know not the good they may do us
As in love they are hovering near!”

CHAPTER XVII

THE SPIRIT OF UNIVERSAL LOVE AND UNITY

IT was during the third week of Aunt Susie's visit that she came suddenly upon Will when, at an unguarded moment, he had seemingly forgotten himself, and, unreasonably provoked by the apparent stubbornness of a favorite horse, was betraying some really cruel instincts toward the helpless beast.

Aunt Susie did not say a word, but such a depth of sadness and real pain came into her eyes, that the boy came to himself at once, with a quick shudder of remorse.

And that evening, as they gathered, with all their old eagerness around her, she directed her conversation skillfully around to the spirit of love, and Will guiltily felt that it was all meant just for him.

"One thing which we must all learn to realize in the very depths of us, my dears," she began, "before we can ever develop ourselves to the fullest extent of all that is within us, is our great

one-ness with all creation. I do not mean with all people, alone, but with all created things,—all animals, all plants, all trees, all waters,—everything in Nature. We were all sent out from the great Universal Source,—each a part of the great Infinite Plan,—and so we are all a part of one another, the spirit of the Great God vibrating in living breath through every cell of animals or inanimate life. The horses, cows, sheep, dogs, birds, bees, butterflies,—every living thing, children,—are our brothers; the trees, rivers flowers, vines, shrubs and grasses are our companions,—because they, like us, are all children of the great All-Father, the creating Spirit of all life. And when we once thoroughly understand it, life is all harmony and peace, and we will send out our love to them, feeling that they, too, may understand, and may love us in return. We know that the animals do when we are kind and tender to them,—why not the plants?”

“I always think they hear us talk to them,” said little Oma.

“Certainly they do,” answered Aunt Susie. “I talk to my plants at home, and I breathe my love about their leaves and little tendrils and buds, and I touch them gently as I water and tend them, till they grow and bloom much more rapidly and beautifully than my neighbors’

plants, who do not try to speak to the little life-spirit within them. Of course they hear me, and obey the caresses of my voice."

"I know the trees and flowers say things to me," said little Pete, who was beginning to dare again now, to put some of his quaint fancies into words.

"And I know they do, too, Pifer," smiled Aunt Susie. "And if we only keep our ears tuned to their voices, and our hearts open, we can come so close to the great throbbing heart of Nature, that every one of her children will talk to us, and will teach us many things that we shall be better and happier for knowing. Then life will all be harmony, and one eternal song of universal love. It will be like a quartette, or a band, or an orchestra. You all know a little something about music, I know,—enough to know that each voice in a quartette sings a different part, just as each instrument in the band or orchestra plays its own part. Not one of the parts would be very beautiful alone,—the flute, snare-drum, and several instruments of the long-sustained notes, as well as the bass voice in the quartette,—might grate dreadfully upon our ears, if they gave their parts all alone. But when they sing or play together, in perfect time with one another, and in perfect chord, what beautiful

harmony they do make, and how necessary each individual part is to the making up of the perfect whole! If one part is out of chord or time, the discord becomes very evident at once to our ears, just as one person out of harmony with the divine law of love and peace may cause considerable break in the harmony of our surroundings. Why, my dears, all of Nature's parts are very necessary to the perfection of the world! We should never carelessly break off the twig of a tree, or break the stem of a flower. It is cruel to step on a worm, to pull the wings from a poor, little fly, or to step on a harmless bug,—indeed, to cause one unnecessary pang of suffering to any living thing. It is really wicked not to allow every one of God's creatures its right to live its life and build up its own little self as God meant it to do. Then they will all be our playmates and companions, giving us back love for our love,—all Nature's children together,—and we will never be alone. We shall love to listen to the croaking of the frogs in the evening or early morning, to the cackling of the hens, the crowing of the roosters, the sounds of waking life in all of Nature's world, because they will be to us as the voices of our friends, our kin."

"But how can we come into touch with them, Auntie Sue?" asked Olive. "How can we get acquainted?"

“By loving them, dear,—simply loving them! Love is a universal language that every living thing understands. They very soon know who loves them,—indeed, they sense the nearness of their friends even more surely and quickly than we do. And if we listen, we can soon learn to know what they would say to us. We can distinguish, one from the other, the different voices of the birds and the bees, the crickets, and the grass-hoppers, and can catch the whisper of every breeze and stream. We can know what the trees would say to us in the rustling of their leaves, and in the crackling of their big boughs in the wind. I have a little way of my own of getting close to creation. I believe I will tell you my little secret!”

“O do! do! Please do, Auntie Sue!” they chimed.

“Well, I will, for it certainly works for me like a magic charm. I go out on my balcony the first thing in the morning, and take in a number of long, deep, full breaths of the pure, fresh morning air, before it becomes tainted by some of the foul breaths of wrong-thinking humanity, or poisoned with the bad thoughts that come pouring from the newly-opened windows of those who do not know how necessary it is to good living and healthy thinking that they should sleep

with their rooms wide open to the pure air of the night-time. Well, as I draw in a long breath, I think, as I inhale its force,—think strongly, sending out the White Knights with every ounce of my might, you understand,—opening my whole being to the breath as I draw it in,—‘Now I am drawing into my whole being health and strength, and goodness, and purity, and love, and success from the very elements of God. I am drinking love from every living creature. I am absorbing into my every nerve and muscle and vein the sunshine and light of all creation. Then, as I let out the breath in a long exhalation, I think, with just the same force and vigor in every word, ‘Now I am sending out all that health and strength, and goodness, and purity, and love and success to all the world, and every soul in it, to every animal, every bird, and bee, every plant and tree and flower, to bless, and brighten and sweeten, and hale, and cheer!’ In this way, you see, I put into operation, two great laws, both the Law of Attraction, and the Law of Compensation.”

“No wonder you love everybody and everything, Auntie Sue,” said Ethel, fondly, “You just can’t help it! And neither can they help loving you back!”

“No, dear, of course not!” agreed Aunt Susie.

“We certainly can’t help anything that is a part of our nature, and when we once make all the good things that we desire the part of our Self that we are building, we can’t help doing good things, for the real Self has to express its own nature,—has to act out the impulses that are a part of it! King Desire’s Knights only need a little earnest practice to get into first-class working order. And there is no one thing calculated to make us more happy, or strong, or useful, than this feeling of one-ness with all things,—this constant communion with the soul-forces of all creation.”

“And they will all really speak to us, Auntie Sue?” asked Olive. “Really and truly?”

“Really and truly! Everything will talk to you, and you may understand them even better than you do some people, because you will be in closer touch with them,—better acquainted, as it were. All Nature is alive with thought and feeling, and filled to overflowing with love and sympathy. And in the air all about you are living spirits,—no, not ghosts of dead things, Alice, so don’t shudder!—but the spirits of all the thoughts that have been sent out by the great minds, as well as by the smaller, undeveloped minds, of the eternal past.”

“What?” asked Ethel. “Do thoughts really live so long?”

“Always, dear. All thought is immortal, even ours! Do you not see how careful we must be of what Thought-Knights we send out, and how we direct them?”

“Our poem! Our poem!” cried Edna, as the clock began to strike.

“You must have a nice large collection of my jingles by this time,—a whole book and brain full!” smiled Auntie Sue. “Well,—let me see:

“I am one with the big world of Nature;
I am one with the flowers and the trees;
I am one with the glistening waters;
I am one with the birds and the bees.

I send out my love to the smallest,—
Over each living creature I yearn,
And back from the heart of all being,
They send me their love in return.

I am part of Infinite Creation,
Of the air,—of those spaces above,—
We are all held in closest vibration
By the force of an infinite love!”

CHAPTER XVIII

THE TEMPLE OF THE BODY

AUNT Susie was pleased the next day to come upon little Pete, standing with his small arm wound caressingly around the neck of old Bruno, and speaking to him earnestly, while the faithful animal wagged his tail in evident understanding and approval.

“Bruno,” he was saying, “you is a good dog,—you is! You is a very good dog. You is a part of me,—yes, you is, Bruno,—and a part of Auntie Sue, too—you is our brother,—and you is a part of everything and everybody,—and you has a dear, sweet soul,—and you loves me, and I loves you,—just lots!”

She stole away, softly, greatly pleased at the assurance that the seed sown must have surely taken root, when even this baby could understand.

There seemed to be a great deal of merriment in the air all day. Several times, she had heard wild bursts of laughter from this or that corner

of the yard, and had noticed little groups of the children formed now in one place, and now in another, and her keen eye had seen that Will seemed to be the centre of attraction in every instance. Evidently, he was entertaining them in some way, she thought, but she paid but little attention. She was always glad to see them happy. She loved the sound of their light-hearted laughter.

The children had all managed to take bad colds that were affecting their health in one way or another, and their mothers had wanted to dose them with this, that, or the other "guaranteed remedy," but Aunt Susie had begged them to leave it all to her.

"They do not need drugs," she said, "but thoughts. Watch my plan, girls, and see if the effect is not much better than the after-results of your usual 'dope!' If, after giving it a fair trial, you prefer your own concoctions, why, of course, I cannot possibly have anything more to say in the matter."

And, as usual, of course, Aunt Susie had her own way.

As the children entered the dining-room that night, it was plain to be seen that the spirit of gaiety was still rampant, in spite of the sniffs, and coughs, and sneezes that accompanied the smiles and laughter.

"What is the joke, children?" asked Aunt Susie, who always liked to have her share in their fun.

"O Auntie Sue," said Olive, with a snicker, "Will has just been too funny! You just ought to hear him!"

"I should certainly like to," said Aunt Susie, "for you know how much Auntie enjoys 'too funny' things!"

All eyes were turned on Will with a giggle of expectation.

"W-w-w-why," he stammered, and then blushed and dropped his head while all laughed at him, heartily. He made another attempt, but broke down utterly. Then he looked at Frank, and nodded for him to explain.

"You see, Auntie," said Frank, "Will had to go to the station this morning for some express Papa had ordered, and while he was there, he saw a travelling man, who could not talk at all without the awfulest stammering, and it tickled Will so much that he has kept telling us how the man talked all day. It has been too funny!"

And again they all laughed.

"M-m-m-ay-b-b-be it w-w-wasn't v-v-very k-k-kind, Auntie S-s-s"—began Will. "B-b-but I d-d-d-didn't m-mean t-t-to be c-cruel. I d-d-didn't st-st-stop t-t-to th-think h-h-how b-bad it m-must b-b-be f-for h-him!"

Aunt Susie listened to his stuttering with surprise.

“It certainly was not kind, Will, to mock the poor fellow’s pitiable affliction. You should have felt very sorry for him. And why do you keep it up, now that you see for yourself how unkind it is?”

Aunt Susie had never spoken to one of the children in so stern a tone before, and the lad’s flush was positively painful. The children did not laugh now. They saw that it was not so much of a joke as they had thought, after all! But they had been so accustomed all their lives to looking up to Will, and following his lead, that it had not occurred to them to think of the matter from any other point of view than that of the fun it was affording them. Now they saw the cruelty of it, and they, too, felt ashamed of their merriment.

“Why, you see, Auntie, he can’t help it. He’s kept it up all day,” volunteered Hattie, “and now he can’t stop when he wants to.”

“I see!” said Aunt Susie, in sudden understanding, and seeing a good chance to point a lesson. “What a splendid lesson for you all in the truth of several of our great laws,—first, the Law of Suggestion,—second, the Law of Attraction,—and third, and most important, the

Law of Compensation. The man's words suggested the act to Will,—his Thought-Knights mingled with the man's Knights by the power of attraction,—and now, he is paying for his cruel thoughts and acts. And do you not see, too, how easily some habits are formed?"

The children felt suddenly depressed as they began to realize the extent of their wrong-thinking all day long, and the serious consequence it may have brought down upon them.

"It is too bad, Will dear," she added, "and of course, I am very sorry. But you may have needed the lesson, and I am sure you will not soon forget it. And now let us not dwell upon the painful matter any longer, and she looked around at them with a smile that would have been quite sufficient to drive away any evil spirit that may have possessed them.

A chorus of coughs and sneezes broke in upon the brief silence that followed.

"I see the Giant Ill-Health is nosing around a little," Aunt Susie began. "We must get after him at once. It will never do to let that wicked old fellow get into our atmosphere,—O dear, no!"

"Mamma was going to give us some medicine,"—began Edna.

“Yes, indeed she was!” said Aunt Susie, with mock indignation. “And what do you think of such impudence on her part? I soon put a veto on that! The idea! It is only mental medicine that we need, and I guess we know enough by this time, to administer that to ourselves, don’t we? What’s the matter with King Desire and his Knights?”

“Do you mean that the King and his Knights can cure the *body*?” asked Henry, in wonder.

“I most certainly do mean just that,” was the quick reply. “And why not? What’s the use of having any king at all, if he isn’t any good just when we need him most? The idea! Why, I’d dethrone that kind of a king at once!”

“O my!” said several of the children. And “Isn’t it wonderful?” asked Olive.

“I have never said much to you before about the care of the body, for I knew that you had been taught to keep it always sweet and clean,—I knew you had learned to feed it on good, plain, wholesome food, and fresh water,—and that you always slept with your windows wide open to the fresh, pure air of Heaven. Your mothers have both been very careful about that, ever since their school-days. We must always keep our bodies perfectly pure and sweet and well,

you know, to make them fit places for the home of the soul,—the beautiful God-spirit,—that is our real Self. A real clean soul could not live in a soiled body, you know, any more than a clean-minded person can bear to stay in a filthy house. We must not only be very particular about keeping the body clean, but we must be very sure to let no disease get any foothold in it.”

“But how can we help it?” asked Frank.

“Just this way,” replied Aunt Susie. “Our faithful Steward not only attends to all the other business of our life, but he directs all the actions of our bodies,—those actions of the heart, stomach, lungs, bowels,—every one of the wonderful organs over which we have no control. Our bodies, you know, are full of thousands of little living cells, and in each of these cells is a little life-germ,—a little man-servant, as you might say,—who takes care of it, and keeps it clean and in repair. This is the spark of that great divine life-principle that keeps us alive. These little servants are continually tearing down old worn-out cells, and building new ones, so our bodies are constantly being made over,—always according to the Steward’s direction. Now, don’t you see how we can have just such bodies as we want? We have only to direct the Steward

as to what we want our bodies to become, to have them made over into just what we wish."

"B-b-but h-h-how?" stammered Will.

"In just the same way that we direct him in anything else. Say to him, the last thing to-night, '*See here, Steward! I see there is some trouble in the head of the temple,*' or the '*throat,*' or the '*chest,*' or wherever your difficulty may be. '*It must be that the servants in that part of the temple are letting things get clogged up,—they can't be attending to their work properly. Now, I just won't have this! Either make them get busy, and clear out all this disturbance, right away, or else turn them all out, altogether, and put new servants in their place, who will look after things! This is my body, and I won't stand for any such slip-shod service. I simply will not have anything in any part of my system but the most perfect health and strength!*' Talk to him very firmly—just what you want, you know, and just as you want it,—and then, trust him to do it! In the morning, you will see a great change. Then get up in the morning with the thought, '*How much better I am! And I am going to get better all day, too!*' and the Knights will fly to bring you health and strength from the universal Source of Supply!"

"Why is anybody ever sick, Auntie Sue, if it is so easy to keep well?" asked Alice.

"They either do not know the Law, Alice, or else they have not enough faith in it to put it

into operation. It is not everybody in this world who has learned how to take care of his own temple! And by the way, Will, you will have to talk very strongly to your Steward to-night to get rid of that habit you have so thoughtlessly brought upon your self!"

"But listen, Auntie Sue," said Henry, "I am sure you would not blame Will quite so much if you knew how really funny the whole thing did look! You see, the boy at the station is a great stammerer,—he seems to be almost possessed by some evil spirit that won't let go of his tongue at all. Well, you see this big fat travelling man who couldn't speak either was trying to find out by the boy what time the train left, and the poor kid didn't dare attempt to answer him, because he was afraid the big man would naturally think he was trying to mock him, and so lick him half to death. That was the way it was when Will got there, and saved the day by telling the fat man what he wanted to know. But it was all so funny, Will couldn't help telling us about it!"

"Yes," said Hattie, "and after he told it once, we just kept him at it. It was our fault as much as Will's, and I think we ought to be punished, too, if he has to be!"

"It is kind of you to shoulder your share of the blame, children, and I know Will appreciates

it. I don't think his punishment will last long, when he gives his Steward the proper orders. Let us all hold the thought for him in the Silence to-night, and send out our Knights to help him in banishing the bad spirit. And all of you must remember after this, and never mock any habit you may not wish to adopt for yourself."

"Auntie Sue," said Oma, timidly, after they had discussed the healing process a little while longer, "is it really, truly wicked to want to be pretty?"

"Certainly not," was Aunt Susie's prompt reply. The God who made the world meant all things in it to be things of beauty, and all people to be attractive to one another. But we must not think first of our looks, you know, for it is the real Self within us that makes its mark upon the body. If we always think sweet, lovely thoughts, and do kind, loving deeds,—always 'Keep Smiling,' and try to make everybody glad around us, our faces will, naturally enough, show the whole world what beautiful thoughts we have inside; for the kind of thoughts we think make their mark upon our faces, and the eyes you know are the 'windows of the soul' through which it looks out upon the world,—and in which the world peers to find out, if it can, what

manner of soul dwells within. If we are truly beautiful within, we can't help being just as beautiful without. It is only when a pretty face tells of a really sweet soul, that it is truly beautiful to the one who understands the reading of human nature. We impress people, not by our faces, but by our thoughts."

"Then it can't be right, can it, Auntie Sue," put in Hattie, "for women to use face-powders and paints and all that stuff?"

"No, for that is a sham, a covering up of the real Self, and a pretending to be what one is not. I do not believe in false appearances of any kind,—false hair, false figures, or anything that serves to disguise the real Self, for the world can only judge us by what it sees, and I want it to judge me for what I am."

"But how about false teeth, Auntie Sue?" asked Frank mischievously.

"Those are for use, and not for looks alone, and are necessary for the health of the body; so I think when I get old and toothless, I shall probably adopt them," replied Aunt Susie, with a smile that disclosed such a perfect set of teeth that that time of need seemed very far in the distance, indeed.

"But to take care of my body," said Alice, who

was very fond of certain good things to eat, "can I never eat green corn, or cucumbers, or——"

"Eat anything and everything you like, dear—whatever your stomach craves. Nothing can hurt you unless you let it."

"Let it?"

"Yes, by drawing the sickness to you by thinking sick thoughts, and believing them."

"But everybody says——"

"Yes, dear, but we were not to let other people's Black Knights get into our kingdom. These people have thought for years that certain things would hurt them and have always eaten them with that thought in mind. So, of course, the thought brought the 'hurt' they called. When you eat, think,—'this food is going to do me good. It will build up the cells of my body, make good, new red blood, make me strong, and keep me in good condition,—my whole body feeling fine!' No matter what you eat, hold that thought, chew the food long and well, enjoying every last crumb, and it will help you. It has to, when you command it so, because it is you alone who are master of yourself. Why, I never think of telling my stomach what it can have! how can I know what it wants, or how much it can handle, unless it tells me, and asks for what it needs? That is its business, not mine.

I have my own business to look after, so I can't possibly look after it, too. I simply tell King Desire to send out the command for health, and he keeps the Knights busy. Then I never fail to remind the Steward that it is his business to keep me well and strong and young,—and just trust the servants of my body to look after their own part of the business, so they attend to all the rest. Well, I see that it is time for bed again. Now, remember, whatever may at any time seem to be going wrong inside the Temple of your Body, give the Steward his orders, and I'll guarantee that he will attend to his business. He has never failed me yet. Here is a little verse for you to repeat, when you find yourself at all inclined to think sick-thoughts,—

“Away with the dreams I have had
Of feeling so sick and so bad!
To think of such nonsense is wrong,
When I am so well, and so strong.
In future, I just mean to see
The health and the strength that's in me,
For such dreams are too foolish to tell
When I know I am perfectly well!”

CHAPTER XIX

WHITE KNIGHTS

THE children's colds disappeared as if by magic, much to their mothers' surprise, and it must be admitted, not a little to their own, while Will, in the course of a day or two, had completely mastered the difficulty in his speech. One bright Thursday morning, during the third week of Aunt Susie's last month with them, she proposed taking them with her for one last long ramble in the woods.

The contrast between their first visit to the heart of Nature's home and this, their last one for possibly many years, was indeed very noticeable. Then, they had been careless, light-hearted children, blind to so many of the beautiful books spread all around for their reading; now, every little voice seemed to have a message for them,—every tiny growth, its own hidden lesson. They had come into touch with Nature, and were really becoming acquainted with her.

"See, Auntie Sue," said Marion, who remembered what his aunt had once told him about the

little twig, "just look at that poor crooked tree over there! it didn't get bent right when it was a child-tree, did it?"

"It didn't have any Auntie Sue to start it straight, did it, Marion?" suggested Frank.

"Do you hear what the stream says, Auntie Sue?" said Henry, after they had gone a little farther. "It says, 'Henry, my voice is small now, and cannot be heard very far, and so is yours, but some day, when I get out to the big ocean and become a part of it, I will have a strong, loud voice, and make the whole world listen to my roar,—and just so will you, when you are a part of the busy man-world just ahead of you!'"

"I believe you will, my boy," said Aunt Susie gravely, for she saw big things ahead of the boy, when he had once thoroughly mastered his own powerful will.

"O see this little plant, Auntie Sue," cried Olive, excitedly. "It is just peeping up through the ground!"

"And what does it say to you, dear?" asked her aunt.

Olive thought a moment.

"It tells me that it has been asleep a long, long time, down in the earth, but now it has heard a voice calling to it to come out to the

light, and learn how to live in the world, and so it is pushing up out of the dark earth to find its real Self!"

"I 'spect it must have been its Auntie Sue's voice it heard calling to it," said little Pifer, looking down thoughtfully at the tiny plant.

Hattie and Alice had run on a little ways ahead, and the merry party soon came upon them, looking with interest at a number of little mounds of sand, where a lot of tiny creatures were hurrying back and forth carrying loads, some of them fully as big as themselves.

"Just look at the ant-hills, Auntie Sue," said Hattie, eagerly. "The ants have been teaching me a lesson."

"Nice aunts always teach lessons," said Frank, with a sly glance at Aunt Susie.

"Of course they do, Frank!" said Aunt Susie. "And what have these little creatures been teaching you, Hattie?"

"Well, Auntie Sue, they've been talking real strong. They haven't stopped to soften their words a bit! They said, 'Now see here, Hattie Evans, look at us! we're nothing but ants,—little, insignificant things, you think,—but just see how busy we are! We are all working hard to build us a warm, dry home for winter, and fill it up with plenty of food. Every one must help.

We won't let the lazy drones live. The person who doesn't do his share of the work has no right to any share of the food!' Wasn't that a good lesson for a lazy girl, Auntie Sue?"

"It would be, if we knew any lazy girls to hear it, Hattie, but I do not know any around here, do you?" asked Aunt Susie sweetly.

"O hear that bird!" broke in Ethel, gaily. "It is singing,—

“‘Be happy! Be happy!

Keep smiling, and be kind!

Be happy, while the sun shines,—

When it doesn't,—never mind!’”

"I see plainly that Ethel is going to be a poet, all by herself, Auntie Sue," said Will, "so we won't be entirely without our verses, when you are too far away, and maybe too busy to send us any!"

"I shall never be too busy for that, Will," said Aunt Susie,—“never, in all this world! I shall think of you all many, many times every day!"

"See this little bit of a flower," said Oma, "looking right up to the sun!"

"Yes, dear, and it will always turn its face to the sun, too! No matter how little light there is, the flower will always find it, and turn its face bravely that way," responded her aunt.

“Even if its Auntie Sue is going away?” asked little Ira, wistfully.

“Yes,—even then, dear,” said Aunt Susie, tenderly.

“I suppose that’s the only way it knows how to ‘Keep Smiling,’” said Oma.

“Where is the little flower you’re all talking about?” asked Harry, who had just joined the group, and was searching the ground uncertainly. “I can’t see a sign of a flower!”

“Because you are doing just what I have been warning you about ever since I came, Harry dear,” said his aunt, laughingly. “You are standing in your own light. Stand over here by us, so that the sun can strike the ground on this side of you, and you’ll see the brave little thing all right.”

And they all laughed heartily at the quick jump he made to avoid throwing his shadow on the plant so near his feet.

“Auntie Sue,” asked Hattie, as they stood a few moments watching a group of butterflies, flitting about in the sunshine from flower to flower, “do you remember telling us all about the butterflies, and just how the caterpillar spins his cocoon, and sleeps in it so long, before he comes out a butterfly?”

“Yes, indeed,” said Aunt Susie. “It was

nearly two years ago that I told you that, wasn't it? I am glad to see that you, too, remember."

"I was just thinking," said Hattie, timidly, "how you had brought every single one of us out of our cocoons this summer Auntie Sue, and made real butterflies of us!"

"Don't you think," asked Edna, "that maybe the poor caterpillar was dreaming, all the time that he was wrapped up in his old quilt, that maybe, sometime, he would have wings and be flying around the world like the pretty colored insects he had seen while he was crawling around the earth on his stomach?"

"Of course he was," said Alice,—“I feel just sure of it! And maybe his King Desire sent out so many Knights, and his Steward worked so hard all the time, that his dreams just simply had to come true!"

"What a sweet thought, girls!" said Aunt Susie, as they paused for lunch under a mammoth oak tree, and proceeded to make themselves comfortable for awhile before rambling any farther. The children began to pick up the acorns from the ground.

"Isn't it wonderful," said Will, turning them over in his hand, "to think that such 'great oaks from little acorns grow?'"

"Yes," said Aunt Susie, "but is it not a great

deal more wonderful to realize that this whole great big tree was once all wrapped up in so small a form as the tiniest acorn? The whole possibility of the tree was there all the time, the real Self of the tree, you know,—the soul of it,—the life-principle,—and when the right influences came to bear upon it, that tiny germ of self felt the call to come out into the world,—the urge of the spirit striving for full expression,—the desire of its destiny,—the craving for light and life. And so its desire brought it forth first as a tiny sprout, then the little shoot, reaching up to the light, then the tiny twig, pushing through the earth determined to be itself, to reach to the very highest of all that it was capable,—and now see the great giant of the woods that it is. And why? Simply because it would not be held down, nor denied its full freedom of expression. It would live out all the great, wonderful life of which it was capable. It would make all its dreams come true! And who knows what dreams of still higher forms of life it may be nursing down in its great wooden heart? Who can know what aspirations may shake its branches, and quiver in the fibre of even the tiniest twig, and leaf and bud?"

The children looked at the great tree almost in awe. They had never realized before just what

a wonderful thing it was! And then, they sank into their places and began to let loose their appetites upon the bountiful luncheon that had been provided for them.

Ralph had been hugely enjoying a very beautiful, luscious-looking red apple. When he reached the core, however, he found a very bad black spot enclosing the seeds.

“O look, Auntie Sue!” he said, with disgust. “My nice, pretty-looking apple had a very bad heart—a bad real Self,—and it deceived me. It said it was good, all through, but it told me a naughty lie!”

“O I wouldn’t say that, Ralph! Wasn’t it better for the poor, pretty apple to put the best side out, and to look pretty to you, and taste good to you, and in that way give you sweet thoughts, and make you happy, in the eating of it, and so do some good to somebody, than it would have been for it to shrivel all up, and forget to ‘keep smiling,’ and to have rosy cheeks, and a nice taste, and all that, just because of that one bad spot? If it had said, ‘O dear! I have such a bad place inside me! I am no good! Nobody will like me! I can’t give any one any pleasure! I might better never have grown into an apple, or become ripe at all! I am just a miserable failure!’—why, it would have grown

sour, and looked crabbed and gnarled, maybe, and so never even begun to fill its mission in the world at all! So many people do that,—their whole lives lost, just because of one weak point, that they have not will-power enough to try to rise above, and crush out of sight! And isn't it a shame? As it is, you see, your apple has done its very best, and given us all pleasure to look at, and you a double pleasure in the eating of it, and as it has lived its life well,—in spite of the one fault it tried so bravely to overcome,—none of us ever guessed at all that the fault was even there!”

After the lunch was all out of the way, they rambled on and on through the woods, finding new lessons everywhere,—new inspirations, encouragements, and bits of truth.

“O what a dear, sweet breath this flower has!” said Alice. “Do smell it, Auntie Sue! I do so love a fragrant flower!”

“Yes,” said Aunt Susie, as she bent her head to inhale the sweetness of the bloom. “That is its atmosphere,—its influence. And don't you see now, children, how we all create just such an atmosphere all around us by very force of our thoughts? People know whenever they get near us just the kind of thoughts we are in the habit of thinking. Some people call this atmosphere

that surrounds us, the aura. There are even some who can see it like a halo about our persons, and say that it is of different colors, according to the thoughts we think. It is, at any rate, the radiation of our thoughts,—our personal influence or magnetism,—the fragrance shooting out from our souls,—and people sense it when they have not the clairvoyant vision to see anything but the material part of us.”

“O what powerful things thoughts are!” said Will. “It almost makes me afraid to think at all, sometimes!”

“Yes, indeed, Will,” agreed his aunt, “but Thoughtlessness is far more dangerous in the long run. Some one has put the real power of thoughts into these significant words, ‘The thoughts of to-day become the dreams of to-night, the habits of to-morrow, and the character of the future.’ It certainly gives me more happiness than I can tell you, my dear children,” she continued, as she seated herself on a large stone, and took an old magazine from the bottom of her lunch-basket, “to see how much you have learned to think for yourself,—every one of you,—not only to think but to see, and feel, all the glorious things around you. Now you are able to find the ‘sermons in stones, and the good in everything,’ that I hoped to lead you to look for.”

"Please give us a sermon from this stone, Auntie Sue," said Frank in his most coaxing tone, lying down on the grass at her feet as he spoke, while the others, always ready for a story, composed themselves in easy attitudes to listen.

"This stone, then," she said, after a brief pause, "has stood in this very place for years, and years, providing a resting-place for many, always filling its own place in the world, and doing its best to learn the full lesson of its life. Some time it may come back to earth as a part of some other than the mineral kingdom, and when it has learned the lesson of that plane, it may come back again and again, learning all that it is given to learn in each little life, till it may even be a human being, and live just such lives, learning just such lessons, as we are living and learning here and now! Even we ourselves may have to come back to school many more times before all the universal lessons have been learned!"

"Do you really think we live lots and lots of times on earth, Auntie?" asked Olive.

"I think it must be so, dear, though it cannot really matter to us," was the reply. "All that need concern us now is the living of this present life well."

"Auntie, why do our thoughts have to come back to us?" asked Will, suddenly. He had

thought a great deal about the Law of Compensation that had twice now given such hard blows to the old Giant that tormented him.

“Simply because our thoughts are like everything else in the universe, Will, and travel in a circle, just as the moon circles around the earth, the earth around the sun, and the sun around a still larger sun, you know. And so, of course, they finally are obliged to come back around to the starting place,” explained Aunt Susie.

“I see! Why, how natural that seems!” said Will, with a quick flash of understanding. “But one thing more bothers me, Auntie dear, and I’d like to have it all straightened out while it is in my mind. When we try so hard to please people, and help people, why are we so often misunderstood, and not appreciated? Why do they think we have some wrong reason for doing as we do? Why can’t they see how good our real motives are?”

“Because they have not had their eyes opened yet. Some day, something you say or do will convince them, and then, it will be all right forever after. But, anyway, it does not need to matter so much to you, for you are rewarded according to your deeds, and your own heart’s intention, and not according to any apparent result. The real result cannot be known in the half-light of

the present. It is only in looking back upon the perfected web of life, that we can see just where and how our little individual threads have helped in the weaving of it all. It is not what we seem to accomplish so much as what we mean to accomplish that counts in the development of our souls,—our real Selves. And as this is all the Children's Hour we will be able to manage to-day, I will give you a poem along this line, while the subject is fresh in my mind:

“Send forth your thought for good, alway,
 Send forth kind word and deed;
Send forth your love, from day to day,
 To meet the old world's need;
Say not that none appreciate
 The good you aim to do,
For if sent out with purpose great,
 It must return to you!

“The blessings from the good you plan
 Are never sought in vain;
Though it may all seem lost to man,
 To you it still is gain:
For it is not what you have done,
 But what you *meant* to do,
That should the goal seem lost or won,
 Still counts as good to you!”

The children had come a longer distance this day than they usually travelled from home, on these delightful outings, so long anticipated and so happily remembered. Oma, Ira, and Pete were feeling somewhat tired, and had several times sighed, and expressed the wish that they were not quite so far away from home.

"Well, you needn't walk home, then," said Aunt Susie, "seeing you are feeling so tired, and dreading the long walk so. Will will just get you some horses to ride."

"Horses?" cried the crowd, in amazement. "Where could he get any horses, here in the very heart of the woods!"

"Ride?" cried all three of the tired little ones, in an eager breath of expectancy.

"Of course! Will, just take your jack-knife and cut each of them a good-sized stick-horse, so they won't have to walk home. It is so unnecessary for them to walk when they are so tired."

Will caught the thought, and immediately started to hunt for good strong sticks of the proper size to be converted into horses. His search was soon rewarded, and the three younger children gleefully mounted their wooden steeds, and merrily galloped homeward, without giving another thought to the aching feet and weary

little legs of which they had been having so much to say.

The older children laughed joyously at the sight of the grotesque little figures, far in advance of them, astride the convenient sticks prancing and dancing in the greatest glee.

“Does it really rest them, Auntie Sue?” asked Hattie.

“See for yourself,” was the smiling reply. “Don’t they act as though it did?”

“It certainly must,” said Alice. “But how can it? Why, they’re exercising twice as much as they did coming out!”

“Of course! Still it rests them,—simply through their thought. They are not walking now,—nor running,—nor jumping,—as you seem to think they are. They are *riding*. I gave the thought to their little Knights, and they very readily accepted it. And by the time they have gone all the way home, you will all see how really rested they are. That is the power the mind has over the body, which I have tried so hard to make you thoroughly understand. It would not be so easy to make your minds accept this particular thought, for your reason would step in to prevent, as it does not with them, but none the less is your mind susceptible to other suggestions that, properly applied, would make

any pain or discomfort easy to bear, if not altogether disappear. Their little minds absorb thought, just as blotting paper absorbs ink."

Sure enough when they had reached home, the three children were loud and enthusiastic in proclaiming how nicely they were rested, and what a fine ride they had had, all the long way home. The older children secretly resolved not to forget the incident, but to make use of the device at any future time when the little folks complained of being "all tired out" when so far away from home!

CHAPTER XX

THE LEADING OF THE SPIRIT

AUNT Susie's visit wore away, altogether too rapidly, for the pleasure of anybody concerned, dropping a seed-thought here, a good lesson there,—until the last Sunday night came, and she was to leave for the far-off city of her yearly work in the early morning.

Her trunks had been all packed the night before, and stood, all strapped and ready, in the hall, giving an air of desolation and desertion to the whole house, the children thought, as they slowly filed in through the passage for their last hour with the aunt who had really thrown open to them the gate-ways to a new world.

“O dear! O dear!” wailed Olive. “Everything is coming to an end. To-morrow, Auntie Sue will be far, far away, and next week, we will have to go back to school, and I never can study! I can't learn! I just can't!”

“You are mis-speaking yourself, are you not, dear? You meant to say ‘I can!’ and ‘I will!’—I am sure you did,” corrected Aunt Susie.

“O you see, I was forgetting, already, Auntie

Sue, and you not even gone yet!" said Olive with a sigh.

"And forgetting the supreme law of the kingdom, too,—were you not? What is it, children?"

"Keep Smiling!" came in a chorus of somewhat choked voices, though their faces involuntarily brightened a little at the words.

"Good! and just to keep you from forgetting again, I have sent for some little pins for you," said Aunt Susie, taking a box from her pocket, and pinning on each little breast a small gold pin, bearing in white enamel, the magic words, "Keep Smiling!" As little Pete fingered his pin, his eyes glowing with pride, he looked down at Bruno, in his old place before the fire, and suddenly stroked the shaggy head in sympathy.

"O no, Pifer dear, I have not forgotten your pal at all," said Aunt Susie, tenderly as she unwrapped a splendid collar upon which was engraved in fine, large letters the same magic motto, and assisted the little fingers to fasten it around his old friend's noble neck. "There, now, Bruno's finer than any of us, isn't he?" she said. "How did you think Auntie Sue could forget so prominent a figure in the group, my little man?"

As she fastened the fifteenth pin upon her own breast, and looked with wet eyes into their glori-

fied faces, she felt her heart throb with thanksgiving that she had been able to bring so much of the real gospel of living,—the real sunshine of life,—the real joy of being,—into each groping little soul.

“As for study, Olive,” she said as she at last sank back into her seat, “what’s the matter with your Steward? Tell him at night what you want to have fixed upon your mind,—what you want to find, or to write,—what problem you want to solve,—and see what he will do for you. You can do just anything in the line of study if you learn to depend upon him.”

“O how fine! Why, I never once thought of that!” cried Olive, her face instantly brightening. “Of course I can, and I will,—now!”

“I always tell him just what time I want to wake up in the morning, and he has never failed me once, in all my life,” said Aunt Susie. “I have had to get up at the most unseasonable hours, too, to catch trains in the middle of the night, and all that, but I never had any other alarm clock, nor anybody else to call me. You can use him in everything you undertake, when you once learn to depend upon him, and show him that you trust him; and, of course, the more you do trust him, the more worthy of trust,—the more dependable,—he naturally becomes!”

"But, O Auntie Sue," said Frank, sadly, "I just don't dare wonder how we will get along when you are not here any more to tell us all these things, and to remind us when we forget!"

"You must just trust the Spirit, dear, to lead you. Trust the Spirit, and obey its leading, and you cannot make any mistakes!"

"But just what is the Spirit, and where?" asked Hattie.

"The Spirit is that 'still, small voice' within you, that teaches you right from wrong,—it is the voice of the Most High,—the voice of God. And where is it, you say? Right within that Temple of Silence I told you about, in the very centre of the Castle of Faith, in the Kingdom of the Soul! Have you not had the texts, 'Ye are the temple of the living God,' and that other one, 'The kingdom of God is within you?' Some people call this Spirit,—this living bit of the Universal God in us,—the Superconscious Mind,—but I will call it the King's Chaplain,—the God of the Soul! And when you pray to Him as I told you,—and, my dears, you know every sincere desire of the soul is a real prayer,—if you will just remember to 'Be still and know,' you will hear the 'still, small voice,' in reply, and it will tell you plainly what to do, and how to do it. If you say, 'Let there be light!' it will surely be

again, just as it was in the beginning, ‘And there was light!’ This is what some people speak of as an ‘impression,’—but it is really the Spirit’s own voice!”

“But where did the voice of the Spirit first come from?” asked Alice.

“Down, down, through many earth-lives of the soul, dear, ever since the creation of worlds, it has grown and learned by experience the way in which a soul must travel till all its lives at school have been lived out, and it can go back at last to the higher realm of its eternal home. Listen to the voice, always, and obey, and the new selves that are builded within you will always be bright and shining monuments to eternal truth! Now for the last poem:

“Deep in the Temple of Silence,
Reigneth the God of my Soul,—
There will He hear my petitions,—
There He my life will control!
Then I must always keep smiling,
Bid all my being rejoice,
As I respond to the prompting,
And am true to the ‘still, small voice.’”

CHAPTER XXI

"GOOD-BYE!"

THEY gathered on the platform of the little station at an early hour the next morning, to wave to Aunt Susie a good-bye that might possibly cover many years!

The sisters wept as they kissed her, and thanked her for the work she had done for their children, as well as for the instructions she had finally so thoroughly instilled into their own minds that they felt they could now carry on, to a great measure, the work she had begun. The fathers, too, in deep, earnest tones, expressed the gratitude they shared for the good they could not only see and hear, but feel in their very souls. Surely, this strange sister-in-law of theirs had known what she was talking about, and had brought real miracles to pass!

But as she looked into the happy faces of the children, and saw behind them the newly-awakened souls,—as she contrasted their expression in the early morning light, with that which she had seen on the afternoon of her arrival, her eyes

filled with tears that were certainly not tears of pain, for this was her sweetest reward,—the most welcome thanks,—that could possibly be expressed. Why, even the wagging tail of the faithful Bruno was a silent tribute,—an eloquent testimony,—assuring her that her visit had certainly not been at all in vain.

“I don’t know how we’ll manage without you,” said Mrs. Evans, “but we’ll do our very best!”

“And we’ll write you fully, and appeal to you in every difficulty that we can’t see our own way out of,” added Mrs. Johnson.

“You must just trust the guidance of your own spirit, dear girls, and the power will come if you ask, ‘in faith believing,’ I am impressed to repeat this little poem of mine to you, which has helped me over many a hard place, ever since I first wrote it, several years ago. I call it

“‘TRUST.’

“I don’t know where ’twill come from,
I know not whence nor how,—
I only know it must come,
And come just here and now!

“I don’t know why I have this
Omnipotence alway,
But I do know I have it,
And all things *must* obey.

“ I can't locate the forces
That bring man good or ill,
But I command their service
By might of my own will.

“ I can't see all the workings
Of this strange God in me,
But where it leads, I follow,—
That's all I need to see! ”

How her heart bounded with thanksgiving as the train pulled out of the little station, and she stood on the rear platform of the last car, waving her handkerchief in response to the perfect snow-storm of signals from the far distance as long as her straining eyes could discern the flutter of a single fragment.

“ God's blessing upon them all! ” she said fervently, as a curve of the road hid the little village entirely from her sight; while back on the platform at the station, a chorus of tearful voices was still chanting, bravely,

“ Good-bye, Auntie Sue, good-bye! ”

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